





Real Fake Fiance

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Intro

Real Fake Fiance (真假未婚妻) by Tang Yin (唐茵)

Male Lead: Tao Fang Ao



Female Lead: Tao Tu Yun



10 Chapters, HE

Synopsis

Two women visits Tao Fang Ao’s home. Both women claim to be his betrothed. The first woman wants to break off their betrothal but she lost the betrothal gift. The second woman is holding the betrothal gift and demands Tao Fang Ao to marry her.

Tao Fang Ao keeps both women as guests in his home to find out who is his real betrothed. He is curious about the secretive Tao Tu Yun. If she is his real betrothed then he wants to keep her by his side forever. But her secret is capable of separating them forever.

Related

part 1



Chapter One (Part 1)

Luo Yang Province.

West of the busy streets of Luo Yang Province, two young women were resting in a quiet alley.

‘Mistress, can you withstand the pain?’ Su Wu asked.

Tao Tu Yun’s back was leaning against a wall.

‘Su Wu, you don’t need to worry,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘I only need to rest for a bit and I’ll be alright.’

But Tao Tu Yun’s pale face, sweat on her forehead and her hand that was slowly rubbing her chest contradicted her words.

‘Mistress, you knew you would be in pain yet you still...’ Su Wu said.

Su Wu sighed. She knew her advice would be useless, her mistress’ heart was too compassionate.

Tao Tu Yun smiled despite her pain.

‘Look what I found,’ a man said. ‘Two beautiful young ladies.’

Tao Tu Yun and Su Wu turned around. A group of men were leering at Tao Tu Yun.

Su Wu stood in front of her mistress and spread her hands to shield her

mistress.

‘Who are you?’ Su Wu asked. ‘What do you want?’

Zhang Huo the leader of the group was smiling slyly.

‘You don’t need to be weary of me,’ Zhang Huo said. ‘It looks like your mistress is ill. I want to invite your mistress to my home to recover.’

Zhang Huo gestured for his servants to detain Su Wu. His servants pulled Su Wu away from Tao Tu Yun.

‘Help!’ Su Wu cried out. ‘Help! Let go. What do you people want?’

The men were too strong, Su Wu could only cry out for help.

Zhang Huo stretched his arms toward Tao Tu Yun but his arms touched air.

A tall young handsome man dressed in a blue outer robe was holding Tao Tu Yun against his chest.

Zhang Huo swallowed his saliva. The young man in front of him had dangerous dark eyes that were glaring at him.

Zhang Huo didn’t dare to say anything. He and his servants ran away without looking back like they were being chased by bandits.

Su Wu was relieved she and her mistress were saved. But she knew her mistress was in immense pain.

‘Let go!’ Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Fang Ao looked at the woman he was holding in his arms. She looked too fragile as though if he held her tighter then she would break. But the fierceness in her eyes looked like she wanted to injure him so he reluctantly let her go.

Tao Fang Ao felt a strange feeling in his heart. But he quickly disappeared from the alley and strode to busier streets.

Tao Fang Ao walked into a busy inn.

‘Why won’t you be careful?’ the inn caretaker asked a waiter. ‘How could you let the kitchen catch fire?’

The inn caretaker sighed helplessly.

‘Luckily the fire was extinguished and only the kitchen was burned,’ the inn caretaker said. ‘Otherwise our customers could have been injured and they would want compensation. What cause the fire?’

‘A stray cat jumped into the kitchen and caused a mess,’ the waiter said. ‘While the head cook was chasing the cat away, the stove was left unattended and the kitchen caught fire. But a strange incident happened before the fire.’

‘What strange incident?’ Tao Fang Ao asked.

‘Second master,’ the inn caretaker and the waiter greeted at the same time.

In the Luo Yang Province everyone knew the Tao Household. The Tao Household were renowned for their years of charity work. Each month the Tao Household would distribute bags of rice and buy medicine for poor households.

‘What strange incident was everyone talking about?’ Tao Fang Ao asked.

Tao Fang Ao ignored the customers’ eyes that were focused on him.

‘Second master, before the fire there were two young lady customers,’ the waiter said. ‘The elegant young lady requested to see the caretaker. She warned the caretaker to be careful that the kitchen would catch on fire today. The caretaker was furious she dared to jinx the inn and he kicked the two young ladies outside the inn. Not long after they left the kitchen caught on fire. Second master, don’t you think it’s a strange incident?’

Tao Fang Ao carefully assessed everyone’s reactions.

‘Were the two young ladies not Luo Yang Province locals?’ Tang Fang Ao asked.

‘I don’t think they were locals,’ the waiter said. ‘I’ve never seen them before today.’

Tao Fang Ao left the inn like an angry puff of smoke. He thought carefully about the fire incident.

End of Chapter One (Part 1)

Related

part 2



Chapter One (Part 2)

Tao Fang Ao entered the Tao Manor.

‘Second master, something bad happened,’ Elder Jiang said.

Elder Jiang’s face was red and he was huffing from running too fast to report to second master.

‘I’m in good health,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘You don’t have to jinx my health.’

Tao Fang Ao opened his fan. Although he was teasing Elder Jiang, he knew something bad must have happened for Elder Jiang to be upset.

But the guards were holding in their laughter at the sight of Elder Jiang’s disorderly state.

‘Second master, someone came with a betrothal gift and she demanded to see you,’ Elder Jiang said. ‘But there are two young ladies who claim to be your betrothed.’

Tao Fang Ao’s fan stopped in mid-air. His body tensed and he spoke in a dangerous tone. ‘Tell me exactly what happened.’

‘The two young ladies arrived an eighth of a shichen hour from each other,’ Elder Jiang said. ‘One of the young ladies is holding the betrothal gift but both

young ladies claim to be your betrothed.'

Elder Jiang was grateful second young master returned home in time to deal with the complicated situation.

'Where are they?' Tao Fang Ao asked.

'Inside-' Elder Jiang said.

Tao Fang Ao didn't wait for Elder Jiang to finish, he strode into the guest room.

Elder Jiang didn't hesitate to follow second master. It wasn't often something that strange happened and he didn't want to miss out.

Inside the guest room, four young ladies were standing. One of the young ladies was Tao Tu Yun. She sensed someone entered the guest room and turned around.

'It's her,' Tao Fang Ao's heart said.

'It's him,' Tao Tu Yun's heart said.

Tao Fang Ao and Tao Tu Yun were separated less than a shichen hour. They both couldn't believe they met again so soon. He thought her face was still pale, but she looked healthier than she did when they met earlier. He didn't know why the purpose of her visit didn't make him angry instead he smiled amusingly.

'Gentleman, are you Tao Fang Ao?' the lady in the green dress asked.

Li Tai Fang was the lady in the green dress and she stood on Tao Fang Ao's left.

'I am,' Tao Fang Ao said.

Tao Fang Ao sat on a chair.

'I heard two young ladies claim to be my betrothed,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'Did you bring the betrothal gift?'

'Of course,' Li Tai Fang said.

Li Tai Fang showed Tao Fang Ao a vintage jade bracelet on her wrist that had Ao engraved on it.

'What?' Su Wu asked. 'How did the bracelet get into her hand?'

Su Wu was startled why Li Tai Fang was wearing her mistress' betrothal gift.

‘Mistress, this bracelet belongs to you,’ Su Wu said.

Tao Tu Yun opened her skilfully embroidered pouch, but it was empty.

Su Wu’s eyes widened. ‘I remember!’

Su Wu pointed an accusingly finger at Li Tai Fang. ‘Mistress, I knew this young lady looked familiar. I remember we met them last night while we stayed at the inn. Her chamber was next to our chamber. She must have overheard us talking about mistress’ betrothal and stole the bracelet from mistress.’

‘You’re a liar,’ Cui Yu said. ‘This bracelet belongs to my mistress. You and your mistress shouldn’t accuse someone innocent. Second master, you can see my mistress’ betrothal bracelet clearly. My mistress is your real betrothed. Second master, you should kick these two impostors outside your home.’

End of Chapter One (Part 2)

Related

part 3



Chapter One (Part 3)

‘Mistress,’ Su Wu called.

Su Wu was worried the imposters’ frightened her mistress speechless.

‘Su Wu don’t worry about it,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘We should leave.’

Tao Tu Yun’s purpose for visiting the Tao Manor in Luo Yang Province was to break off the betrothal. Although she didn’t expect to meet imposters, she was

relieved to leave.

‘Wait!’ Tao Fang Ao said.

Tao Fang Ao sat and listened to the three young ladies arguing with each other. The situation surprised him but Tao Tu Yun’s reaction surprised him the most. Tao Tu Yun was indifferent while her maid looked more concerned about the situation.

‘Elder Jiang, can you bring me the bracelet for me to see closely?’ Tao Fang Ao asked.

Elder Jiang immediately stepped in front of Li Tai Fang and retrieved the bracelet for second master. Then he stood aside to continue watching the amusing performance.

Tao Fang Ao carefully looked at the bracelet. It was the betrothal gift his father gave to his betrothed. It was similar to his first sister-in-law’s bracelet except Ao was engraved on it instead of his first brother’s name Ling.

‘The two young mistresses, please explain how you possess this bracelet,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘Tell me your name and where you’re from too.’

‘My name is Li Tai Fang,’ Li Tai Fang said. ‘I’m from the imperial city. My father gave me this bracelet and told me to go to Luo Yang Province to look for my betrothed, a man name Tao Fang Ao.’

Li Tai Fang was scared she said something wrong by the intense scrutiny in Tao Fang Ao’s eyes, her head couldn’t help but tremble.

‘It’s your turn,’ Tao Fang Ao said calmly to Tao Tu Yun.

‘My name is Tao Tu Yun and I’m from Liu Yue Province,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘When I was six years old, Gentleman Tao was passing by Liu Yue Province. He stayed in my family home for several days. Before he left he gave me this bracelet. He instructed me when I turn sixteen that I should go to the Tao Manor in Luo Yang Province and request his second son Tao Fang Ao to honor our betrothal.’

Tao Tu Yun explained smoothly while looking directly at Tao Fang Ao’s eyes. She was curious who he would believe. Although it was their second meeting,

her intuition told her that he was wasn't someone easily deceived. The moment she stepped into Luo Yang Province, she heard many rumors about the Tao Fang brothers. The locals respected and loved the Tao Fang brothers.

Tao Fang Ao looked back and forth between Tao Tu Yun and Li Tai Fang, but his hard to read eyes landed on Tao Tu Yun. While everyone was holding their breath for his reply, he smiled at Tao Tu Yun.

'The two young mistresses both claim to be my betrothed but I don't know who is my real betrothed,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'Young mistresses should stay in the Tao Manor as guests while I investigate this matter. After it's resolved, I won't be merciful toward the imposter.'

'Wait,' Tao Tu Yun said. 'The truth is the purpose why I came here isn't for you to honor our betrothal but to break our betrothal. I think there is no reason for me to be here and I should leave.'

Although Tao Tu Yun's voice was soothing, her words startled everyone, even Tao Fang Ao's body tensed.

'How do I know if your words are sincere and not a ploy to retreat?' Tao Fang Ao asked. 'Like I said earlier, young mistresses should stay here while I find out who is my real betrothed. Everything else can be discussed later.'

Tao Fang Ao didn't know why his heart felt discomfort after he heard Tao Tu Yun wanted to break their betrothal. They've only met twice, he didn't know why he felt a strange connection with her.

'Elder Jiang, escort the young mistresses to the guests' chambers,' Tao Fang Ao said.

'Young ladies please follow me,' Elder Jiang said.

Tao Tu Yun didn't know why Tao Fang Ao insisted that she stayed in his home. But she couldn't reject Elder Jiang's hospitality and followed Elder Jiang to the guests' chambers.

Half a shichen hour later Elder Jiang returned to the guest room. Second master was still inspecting the bracelet.

'Second master, the young ladies have settled into the guests' chambers,'

Elder Jiang said. 'Second master, do you know who is your real betrothed?'

'Elder Jiang, who do you think is real and who is fake?' Tao Fang Ao asked.

Elder Jiang wasn't an ordinary caretaker. Elder Jiang was fifty years old and he was the Tao Manor's caretaker for more than thirty years. He was loyal and caring toward everyone at the Tao Manor. He treated the Tao brothers like his sons. His biggest dream was for the four Tao brothers to succeed and have happy families of their own to honor their father's last request before dying.

'Second master, I'm not certain who is your real betrothed,' Elder Jiang said. 'Even though Lady Tao didn't possess the bracelet, she doesn't look like an imposter. This strange situation muddled my head.'

Elder Jiang didn't know why he believed the elegant Tao Tu Yun, but he felt she was genuine. He suspected Su Wu was telling the truth and Li Tai Fang stole the bracelet from Tao Tu Yun. He thought the strange situation was Senior Tao's fault for betrothing the four Tao brothers before dying. Apart from first master who was recently married, the three other Tao brothers didn't know who their betrothed was. All they knew was if they met their betrothed before their twenty-fifth birthday then they needed to honor their betrothal. But after the twenty-fifth birthday, their betrothal would be cancelled if they didn't meet their betrothed. It was the reason why third and fourth masters were in hiding. First master couldn't escape his fate and second master looked after the Tao Household while being weary before turning twenty-five.

'Elder Jiang, you should stand by and see how the real fake betrothed is unravelled,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'Like I said I won't be merciful toward the imposter.'

Tao Fang Ao was calmly fanning his ruthless head.

Tao Fang Ao wasn't merciful like his first brother, nor was he carefree like third brother and gentle like fourth brother. Anyone who schemed against him or had bad intentions to harm any of his family members, he would be merciless toward them and make them remember three words for life, Tao Fang Ao.

Elder Jiang shivered. He pitied the imposter who dared to deceive second master. He knew second master resented being betrothed, but second master hated the imposter more than second master's resentment. Whoever was the

imposter, he hoped the imposter would confess before second master gathered evidence otherwise the imposter would leave the Tao Manor without their life intact.

End of Chapter One (Part 3)

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part 4



Chapter One (Part 4 of 4)

The western guest chamber.

‘Mistress, I didn’t expect Tao Fang Ao was the man who rescued us,’ Su Wu said. ‘But what are we doing to do? Mistress, the imposter stole your bracelet and we can’t leave.’

Tao Tu Yun frowned, it was Li Tai Fang’s fault she was in an unwanted dilemma. Not only did Li Tai Fang stole her bracelet, Li Tai Fang dared to lie about being Tao Fang Ao’s betrothed. She couldn’t believe such an inconsiderate impostor existed in the world.

‘I don’t know what to do either,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun faced the open wooden window. The wind messed her hair but it couldn’t blow away the worries deep in her heart. She remembered if Tao Fang Ao didn’t save her and Su Wu in the alley then they would have lost their lives. She also couldn’t help remembering how he held her protectively in his arms. She was curious what kind of person he was and how he was going to deal with having two women claiming to be his betrothed at the same time. She could see he was unhappy about their betrothal and Li Tai Fang’s lies only added to his disgruntlement. She couldn’t help but smile at the absurd situation.

‘Mistress, how long do you think we have to stay here for?’ Su Wu asked.

Su Wu felt helpless that in her mistress’ weak condition, because her mistress’ bracelet was stolen it delayed her mistress’ initial plan.

‘At most it’ll be several days,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun had anticipated after breaking the betrothal she could return to Liu Yue Province. But she knew it was better if she patiently stayed in the Tao Manor for several days. Tao Fang Ao was a man who had intelligent eyes, and that she shouldn’t dream about leaving until he had evidence to show who the imposter was.

‘Are you Tang Fang Ao’s betrothed?’ Luo Bing Liang asked.

Luo Bing Liang was a petite woman and also Tao Fang Ling’s wife. She had shiny eyes and it would be hard for strangers to detect that she was two months pregnant. Her shiny eyes looked curiously at Tao Tu Yun.

‘Young lady, you are...’ Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun admired the ethereal beauty of the woman who was standing in front of her. She didn’t know why her heart was curious about the beauty’s identity.

‘I’m Luo Bing Liang,’ Luo Bing Liang said. ‘I’m Tao Fang Ao’s first sister-in-law.’

Luo Bing Liang assessed Tao Tu Yun, smiled and a dimple was visible on her cheek. It only took a glance and she instantly liked the elegant lady in front of her. Tao Tu Yun had a rare tranquil aura that could make anyone feel at peace

while looking at Tao Tu Yun.

‘Lady Luo, you came here because...’ Tao Tu Yun prompted.

Tao Tu Yun was surprised someone like Luo Bing Liang who looked the same age as her was married and was also Tao Fang Ao’s first sister-in-law. She felt Luo Bing Liang’s happy aura meant it would be strange if Luo Bing Liang was unhappy after marrying into the Tao Household. Her eyes turned gloomy, she thought in her life she wouldn’t be as blessed as Luo Bing Liang.

‘You don’t need to be alarmed,’ Luo Bing Liang said. ‘I came here to greet you.’

Earlier Luo Bing Liang heard Elder Jiang ‘volunteer’ to tell her about Tao Fang Ao’s real fake betrothed situation so she rushed to the guests’ chambers. She thought these recent days at the Tao Manor were too peaceful, but the four ladies’ appearance had livened the Tao Manor. She was happy to see the amusing performance, because even Tao Fang Ao was affected.

‘Can I call you Tu Yun?’ Luo Bing Liang asked.

‘You can,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun smiled and nodded. She felt surprised Luo Bing Liang felt close to her.

‘Lady Luo, have you been to the eastern guest chamber?’ Tao Tu Yun asked. ‘Tao Fang Ao’s other betrothed is there.’

Luo Bing Liang thought there was a teasing tone behind Tao Tu Yun’s gentleness. Her shiny eyes widened. She realised Tao Tu Yun was an intelligent woman and wouldn’t need another person’s support to overcome the situation.

‘Tu Yun, I realised I’m continually liking you more and more,’ Luo Bing Liang said. ‘I’m not going to lie to you, earlier I visited the eastern guest chamber.’

Luo Bing Liang admitted Li Tai Fang was a beauty. But Li Tai Fang gave off an aura of falseness that she couldn’t endure.

Tao Tu Yun smiled. Before she could reply, a tall man appeared behind Luo Bing Liang. She didn’t know where the tall man came from. He was frowning but his eyes were bright while he was looking at Luo Bing Liang.

Luo Bing Liang suspected why Tao Tu Yun was looking behind her. She turned

around, closed her small mouth and her heart cried for mercy.

‘Xiao Bing, didn’t you say you felt seriously nauseous?’ Tao Fang Ling asked. ‘Why aren’t you resting in our chamber? Why did you run to the western guest chamber?’

Tao Tu Yun could see Luo Bing Liang’s tall husband loved Luo Bing Liang. He wrapped an arm around Luo Bing Liang and wanted to escort Luo Bing Liang to their chamber to rest.

Tao Tu Yun smiled and nodded farewell at the captured Luo Bing Liang.

‘Wait... wait...’ Luo Bing Liang pleaded. ‘Tu Yun welcome to the Tao Manor. I’ll visit you again soon to gossip.’

Tao Fang Ling led his wife toward their chamber. But she turned around and waved farewell to Tao Tu Yun.

Tao Tu Yun could see the resemblance between Luo Bing Liang’s husband and Tao Fang Ao so it wasn’t hard for her to see that Luo Bing Liang’s husband was Tao Fang Ao’s first brother.

Tao Tu Yun thought Luo Bing Liang was an interesting woman and being detained in the Tao Manor wouldn’t be a bad experience. But she hoped after Tao Fang Ao found out the truth then she could safely leave, because the Tao Manor wasn’t her home.

End of Chapter One (Part 4 of 4)

Related

part 1



Chapter Two (Part 1)

Two handsome brothers were focused on the chess board in front of them.

Tao Fang Ao was holding a chess piece in his hand and contemplating what move to make.

‘First brother, why are you free to play chess comfortably with me today?’ Tao Fang Ao asked. ‘Don’t you need to be with first sister-in-law?’

Tao Fang Ling married Luo Bing Liang a year ago, his wife was his life. After he found out his wife was pregnant, he didn’t want to be separated from her. So he forced Tao Fang Ao to take care of the Tao Household’s business while she was pregnant.

Tao Fang Ao didn’t dare to be angry or protest. No matter how he looked at his first sister-in-law, he couldn’t believe she was pregnant. She was the same as the past, quick to anger, active and she made many people sweat worriedly. Because she was pregnant with the Tao Household’s heir and Tao Fang Ao didn’t dare to voice his opinion to Tao Fang Ling about overseeing the Tao Household’s

business on his own.

‘Xiao Bing is taking an afternoon nap,’ Tao Fang Ling said. ‘I asked Xiao Sheng to watch over her while she’s napping.’

Tao Fang Ling’s eyes didn’t leave the chess board.

‘Having a wife is troublesome,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

Tao Fang Ao put a chess piece on the board and Tao Fang Ling smiled.

‘In my eyes my wife isn’t troublesome,’ Tao Fang Ling said. ‘I’m lucky I met my wife. I’m not like you. I heard your betrothed appeared, but there are two women who claim to be your betrothed.’

‘First brother, why do I feel your purpose of coming here isn’t to play chess with me?’ Tao Fang Ao asked. ‘Did you come here to discuss my situation?’

Tao Fang Ao frowned. He picked up a cup of tea and sipped tea. He smelt the tea fragrance in four directions and was distracted from the chess game.

‘What?’ Tao Fang Ling asked. ‘Is your first brother not allowed to ask you about your betrothed?’

Tao Fang Ao didn’t underestimate Tao Fang Ling’s strategy by Tao Fang Ling’s carefree smile.

Tao Fang Ao knew Tao Fang Ling’s carefree smile was reserved for when Tang Fang Ling had a request that even their younger siblings wouldn’t dare to refuse.

‘First brother, you received news fast,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

Tao Fang Ao could only smile helplessly. He didn’t dare hide anything from Tao Fang Ling and he confessed everything.

‘What do you want to do next?’ Tao Fang Ling asked. ‘In your heart who you think is your betrothed?’

‘I don’t know yet,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘I’ll take care of this situation thoroughly. First brother, you don’t need to worry about it.’

Regardless of who Tang Fang Ao’s real betrothed was, he was going to repay the imposter for daring to deceive him.

‘Xiao Bing has a good impression of Lady Tao,’ Tao Fang Ling said. ‘What kind

of person do you think Lady Tao is?’

Tao Fang Ling needed to be certain Tao Tu Yun wasn’t a dangerous person otherwise he wouldn’t be at ease to let his wife spend time with Tao Tu Yun.

‘First brother, you can be at ease,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘I’ve asked trusted servants to carefully observe the two young ladies’ movements. Besides, Lady Tao doesn’t appear to be a bad person. Also, I wouldn’t give them an opportunity to harm first sister-in-law.’

An image of an elegant and courteous Tao Tu Yun appeared in front of Tao Fang Ao. He shook his head to stop his heart from beating wildly.

Tao Fang Ling’s eyes didn’t miss Tao Fang Ao’s distracted look. Tao Fang Ling thought Elder Jiang was right, they should enjoy the live performances in the Tao Manor.

In the western guest chamber, Tao Tu Yun thought about the stormy night. It rained throughout the night. Although the rain stopped, it was still cold during winter.

Tao Tu Yun stood at a window and stared at the sky. She felt like the cold surrounded her.

‘Mistress,’ Su Wu called.

Su Wu was scared her mistress would catch a cold. She picked up a red thick cape with a white fur collar and ran to mistress.

‘Mistress how can you dress lightly like this?’ Su Wu asked. ‘What happens if you get pneumonia? Mistress, you know you have a weak body. Why isn’t mistress taking good care of your body?’

Su Wu draped the cape around mistress’ shoulders while continuously reprimanding mistress’ carelessness about mistress’ health.

An outsider wouldn’t have guessed Su Wu was Tao Tu Yun’s maid by the way Su Wu behaved.

‘Yes, yes, yes,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘My dear Su Wu, I know I was wrong. You don’t need to say anything else.’

Tao Tu Yun sighed and let Su Wu tied the cape collar around her neck until Su

Wu was satisfied the cold wind couldn't affect her body. Tao Tu Yun smiled at Su Wu's upset tone, she didn't see Su Wu as her maid.

Su Wu's eyes looked suspiciously at mistress. If mistress took better care of mistress' body then she wouldn't need to be worried each day since she started working as mistress' personal maid.

Su Wu grew up with mistress who treated her like a sister. She was grateful toward mistress and felt it was a sisterly duty to take care of mistress.

Outside the door, willow leaves were rustling and Su Wu noticed a yellow dress was coming toward mistress' chamber.

'Lady Li,' Su Wu called.

Su Wu stood in front of mistress to protect mistress from Li Tai Fang.

'Why is a thief like you visiting here?' Su Wu asked. 'Thieves are not welcome here.'

'You're only a maid,' Li Tai Fang said. 'It isn't your place to speak.'

Li Tai Fang arrogantly assessed Tao Tu Yun. Tao Tu Yun was elegant and had a bright pair of mesmerizing eyes. But Tao Tu Yun had a subtle intimidating aura that made anyone who stood in front of Tao Tu Yun not dare to offend Tao Tu Yun. Also, she didn't want to admit Tao Tu Yun was an extraordinary beauty and posed a threat to her purpose.

'Su Wu don't be rude,' Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun didn't want to give Li Tai Fang an excuse to hurt Su Wu, she pulled Su Wu behind her and she smiled politely at Li Tai Fang.

'Lady Li, what is the purpose of your visit?' Tao Tu Yun asked.

'Mistress is here to tell you two to wake up,' Cui Yu said. 'Before second master finds out who is the imposter, you two should leave the Tao Manor.'

Su Wu was angry Cui Yu dare to falsely accuse her mistress of being an imposter. Su Wu stepped in front of her mistress and she wanted to give back justice to her mistress.

'What laughable nonsense!' Su Wu said. 'It's my mistress who should be saying

those words to you two. You and your mistress are thieves. First you two stole my mistress' jade bracelet then your mistress dare to steal my mistress' identity. My whole life I've never met such despicable people like you two. Today you two have widened my eyes.'

Li Tai Fang's complexion was green from anger and she raised her hand to slap Su Wu.

'Stop!' Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun took steps back and she pulled Su Wu behind her again. Initially she wanted to be civil toward Li Tai Fang. But she would never let anyone bully someone close to her.

'Lady Li, no matter what someone says, you shouldn't slap another person,' Tao Tu Yun said. 'Who is real and who is fake, in all our hearts we know the truth. We should leave everything for Tao Fang Ao to investigate and decide what happens.'

'You!' Li Tai Fang said.

End of Chapter Two (Part 1)

Related

part 2



Chapter Two (Part 2)

Elder Jiang coughed.

Li Tai Fang would have done more than glaring at Su Wu if Elder Jiang didn't enter the chamber.

Elder Jiang had witnessed what happened. He didn't want anyone to be injured so he interrupted the tension between the women.

'Second master invites two young mistresses to join him for an afternoon meal,' Elder Jiang said.

'I'll be troubling Elder Jiang,' Li Tai Fang said.

Li Tai Fang smiled insincerely and hid her earlier loud tantrum mannerisms.

'Mistress...' Su Wu said.

Su Wu held her mistress' hand tightly. Su Wu was worried Li Tai Fang would bully mistress while mistress was on her own.

'Su Wu don't worry,' Tao Tu Yun said. 'It's one meal.'

Tao Tu Yun smiled to comfort Su Wu's worries. Tao Tu Yun saw Elder Jiang was waiting outside and she quickly followed him.

Elder Jiang led the two mistresses past a fake mountain landscape to a beautiful villa next to a pond.

Tao Tu Yun's head finally understood why the Tao Manor was renowned for the biggest manor in Luo Yang Province. She memorised the route from her chamber to Tao Fang Ao's villa since she wouldn't be able to leave for a long period.

'Elder Jiang, I heard second master has three brothers,' Li Tai Fang said. 'But why haven't I seen his brothers? It's proper for me to greet them since in the future I'll be part of their family.'

'Apart from first master and his wife living in another villa of the Tao Manor, third master and fourth master are not living inside the Tao Manor,' Elder Jiang said.

Elder Jiang was walking in front of Li Tai Fang, he frowned after he heard Li Tai Fang's presumptuous statement about becoming a member of the Tao Household. But he politely answered Li Tai Fang's question.

'I heard the Tao Household owns the two biggest inns in west and east of Luo Yang Province,' Li Tai Fang said. 'Is it true?'

Li Tai Fang couldn't resist satisfying her curiosity at the first opportunity Elder Jiang was free. When she first arrived in Luo Yang Province, she stayed at Long Fang Inn in the west. Inside the inn restaurant there weren't any vacant seats and it was livelier than the busy streets. She asked a waiter about the owner and found out Long Fang Inn belongs to the Tao Household as well as the big inn in the east of Luo Yang Province.

'It's true,' Elder Jiang said.

Elder Jiang turned around and he glanced coldly at Li Tai Fang's happy face. Then he continued walking to second master's villa. His impression of Li Tai Fang was lower than an abyss.

'Second master is waiting for two mistresses inside his villa,' Elder Jiang said.

Elder Jiang waited for the two mistresses to enter second master's villa and promptly left afterward.

Li Tai Fang walked fast into Tao Fang Ao's villa and immediately she saw Tao Fang Ao's handsome face in front of a table. She didn't wait for a maid to guide her to the table. Instead she walked faster to sit next to Tao Fang Ao.

Tao Tu Yun walked slowly into Tao Fang Ao's villa. She chose to sit the furthest away from Tao Fang Ao and Li Tai Fang at the table.

Tao Fang Ao glanced at Tao Tu Yun and Li Tai Fang then he gestured for the maid to bring afternoon dishes to the table.

The maid quickly left the room and returned with a tray of dishes.

Li Tai Fang stole many glances at Tao Fang Ao's handsome face.

'Second master, it's my first time visiting Luo Yang Province,' Li Tai Fang said. 'As the host shouldn't you give me a tour of Luo Yang Province?'

'I don't know who is real and who is fake between the two of you so neither of you can take one step outside the Tao Manor,' Tao Fang Ao said.

Tao Fang Ao glared coldly at Li Tai Fang who was purposely leaning close to him.

Li Tai Fang knew Tao Fang Ao's cold glare warned her to behave. She immediately sat upright and didn't dare to continue tempting him with her body.

Li Tai Fang realised Tao Fang Ao wasn't someone who could be easily manipulated in one hand and she needed to be careful while she stayed at the Tao Manor.

'Are you intending to hold us captive in your home?' Tao Tu Yun asked. 'It makes me doubt if the Tao Household is truly a charitable household in Luo Yang Province as rumored.'

Tao Tu Yun was silently eating the dishes in front of her until she heard Tao Fang Ao's threat.

Even though Tao Tu Yun words were meant to provoke Tao Fang Ao, he couldn't help but be attracted to her soothing tone.

Tao Fang Ao looked admiringly at Tao Tu Yun, her words told him she wasn't a simpleton. In front of him, Tao Tu Yun was enticingly elegant and intelligent. His impressions of Tao Tu Yun and Li Tai Fang who sat beside him and failed to seduce him were as vast as the sky. He was anticipating the results of the investigation about Tao Tu Yun and Li Tai Fang. He hoped Tao Tu Yun wouldn't disappoint his expectations after the truth was exposed.

‘Lady Tao, what you said is a separate issue to what I said,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘There is no ulterior motive for the Tao Household contributing to Luo Yang Province. But between you two there is one person who is a thief and has an ulterior motive for entering my home. Lady Tao if you were in my position wouldn’t you take precautions too?’

‘Second master don’t you think holding two maidens captive in your home is an excessive precaution?’ Tao Tu Yun asked.

Tao Tu Yun had thought about the injustice of being locked in the Tao Manor for a few days so she wanted to protest for her benefit at the first appropriate opportunity.

‘A person’s heart is hard to see,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘Forgive me for taking precautions.’

Tao Fang Ao was surprised how amusing it was to talk with Tao Tu Yun. It made him forget that between Tao Tu Yun and Li Tai Fang there was someone masquerading as his fake betrothed. Tao Tu Yun and Li Tai Fang gave him different kind of headaches. He stared at Tao Tu Yun and fell into deep thought.

Tao Tu Yun thought Tao Fang Ao was being courteous to answer her honestly and she knew as a guest under his home that she should concede.

But Li Tai Fang glared jealously at Tao Tu Yun while Tao Fang Ao and Tao Tu Yun talked with each other and ignored her.

End of Chapter Two (Part 2)

Related

part 3



Chapter Two (Part 3)

‘Stop!’ Li Tai Fang ordered.

After the afternoon meal, Li Tai Fang and Tao Tu Yun left Tao Fang Ao’s villa. Li Tai Fang checked four directions before she confronted Tao Tu Yun.

‘Lady Li, what is it that you want to say?’ Tao Tu Yun asked.

Tao Tu Yun turned around and she smiled politely at Li Tai Fang.

‘I’m warning you to admit your identity and you’re not allowed to seduce Tao Fang Ao otherwise you can’t blame me for being uncourteous!’ Li Tai Fang threatened.

Li Tai Fang wasn’t going to let Tao Tu Yun threaten her chance of becoming Tao Fang Ao’s wife.

‘Lady Li, I don’t understand what identity you want me to admit.’ Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun sighed. Until Tao Fang Ao finished investigating, she knew Li Tai Fang would continuously attempt to threaten her.

‘Don’t act dumb!’ Li Tai Fang said. ‘You’re the fake. I’m encouraging you to confess to Tao Fang Ao otherwise I fear after the truth is exposed, you’ll be dragged to the magistrate’s court.’

Li Tai Fang’s unprovoked second threat made Tao Tu Yun lose her usual

politeness and evoked her anger.

‘Lady Li, I’ve said it before, our hearts know who is real and who is fake,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘What you said to me applies to yourself. I’m advising you to resolve this situation amicably.’

Tao Tu Yun wasn’t someone who wanted to compete with other people. But if she continued to retreat when dealing with Li Tai Fang then it would make Li Tai Fang more intolerable.

Initially Tao Tu Yun wasn’t concerned about the misunderstanding about her betrothal, because she wanted to break her betrothal. She was relieved someone took her identity. But she didn’t think she would be held captive at the Tao Manor and had to face the vicious Li Tai Fang so her initial relief disappeared. She was anticipating for day the truth was exposed then she could honorably leave the Tao Manor.

‘You... if you’re going to be like this then we’ll see what happens!’ Li Tai Fang said.

Li Tai Fang glared at Tao Tu Yun, stepped around Tao Tu Yun and she strode to her chamber.

Li Tai Fang’s outburst gave Tao Tu Yun a bad feeling. Tao Tu Yun was the one who had the right to threaten Li Tai Fang, but it was Li Tai Fang who bullied her. She shook her head at the laughable situation.

‘Lady Li is a vicious person,’ Luo Bing Liang said.

Tao Tu Yun turned around and saw Luo Bing Liang stepped out from behind the fake mountain.

‘Lady Luo,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun was surprised to see Luo Bing Liang. She wondered how long Luo Bing Liang was hiding behind the fake mountain and why no one could detect Luo Bing Liang’s presence.

Earlier Luo Bing Liang was taking a stroll around the Tao Manor and she purposely hid behind the fake mountain because she wanted to eavesdrop on Tao Tu Yun and Li Tai Fang’s conversation. It was a good opportunity for Luo

Bing Liang to find out who was actually Tao Fang Ao's future wife, she didn't want to waste her silver taels in the wrong basket. Everyone at the Tao Manor apart from the parties involved were betting who Tao Fang Ao's real betrothed was.

Luo Bing Liang didn't think she would find out how vicious Li Tai Fang was. She hoped Li Tai Fang wasn't Tao Fang Ao's real betrothed, because she doubted Tao Fang Ao could tolerate being married to Li Tai Fang.

'Lady Tao, you're truly a good person,' Luo Bing Liang said. 'If I was in your position, I wouldn't be as polite to someone standing in front of me and yelling threats at me.'

Earlier Luo Bing Liang didn't hear who started the argument so she listened carefully to the rest of the argument. It was Li Tai Fang who was bullying Tao Tu Yan.

'Lady Luo, you know how to jest,' Tao Tu Yun said. 'Lady Luo, how many people do you think dare to raise their voice in front of you?'

Tao Tu Yun thought Luo Bing Liang spoke sincerely in front of her and she was happy to spend time with Luo Bing Liang. Perhaps they could become good friends.

'Lady Tao, you're right,' Luo Bing Liang said. 'Even Tao Fang Ling rarely raises his voice in front of me unless I do something too unreasonable.'

Luo Bing Liang smiled and agreed with Tao Tu Yun. She admired Tao Tu Yun's intelligence.

'If Lady Luo doesn't have anything else to say then I'll be returning to my chamber to rest,' Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun didn't want Su Wu to worry about her being on her own for a long time.

'There's no rush to return to your chamber,' Luo Bing Liang said. 'You'll be staying at the Tao Manor for a long period. Why don't I give you a tour?'

Luo Bing Liang had a good impression of Tao Tu Yun from the start. She didn't care if Tao Tu Yun wasn't Tao Fang Ao's real betrothed, she would still want to

give Tao Tu Yun a proper tour of the Tao Manor.

‘Then... I’ll be troubling Lady Luo,’ Tao Tu Yun conceded.

End of Chapter Two (Part 3)

Related

part 4



Chapter Two (Part 4 of 4)

‘Mistress, how can you be in the mood to paint?’ Su Wu asked.

Su Wu returned to the west guest chamber and she couldn’t believe mistress was leisurely painting.

‘Did something happen?’ Tao Tu Yun asked.

‘Lady Li’s been shadowing second master the last few days,’ Su Wu said.

‘Mistress why are you still painting?’

Su Wu found it strange why the last few days Li Tai Fang didn’t look for mistress to cause trouble. But she didn’t think Li Tai Fang used opportunities to get closer to Tao Fang Ao. What if Tao Fang Ao fall for Li Tai Fang? What would happen to mistress?

‘Su Wu, take a look, what do you think of the flower I painted?’ Tao Tu Yun asked.

Tao Tu Yun showed her painting to Su Wu.

‘Mistress... is this me?’ Su Wu asked. ‘Mistress, can you give this painting to me?’

Su Wu’s eyes were bright and she was smiling happily while looking closely at mistress’ painting of her. In the past mistress usually painted flowers and landscapes, she didn’t think mistress could paint replica portraits.

‘I painted a portrait of you to give to you,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun raised her chin and compared the painting with Su Wu. She wasn’t surprised the painting resembled Su Wu even if she painted from memory, because she was familiar with Su Wu’s features.

‘Thank you mistress,’ Su Wu said.

Su Wu was temporarily distracted by the portrait of herself. Then she remembered why she was worried for mistress and put the portrait on a table.

‘Mistress, did you hear what I said to you before?’ Su Wu asked.

Tao Tu Yun sighed, stood and stepped to the window. The wind was swaying the grass and trees.

‘Su Wu, did you forget why we came to the Tao Manor?’ Tao Tu Yun asked. ‘We’re only staying here until Tao Fang Ao finds out the truth. Then we can honourably leave the Tao Manor. I’m not interested about how Lady Li and Tao Fang Ao’s relationship is progressing.’

‘Even if that is true, we can’t let that thief benefit by deceiving other people,’ Su Wu said. ‘I’m scared Tao Fang Ao will fall for that thief over time and it wouldn’t matter if he finds out the truth later.’

Su Wu didn’t know what else to say, she only knew it wouldn’t be fair if Li Tai Fang benefit from Li Tai Fang’s lies.

‘Isn’t that a good outcome?’ Tao Tu Yun asked. ‘Regardless of who Tao Fang Ao fall for, it’s irrelevant to us.’

Tao Tu Yun’s eyes looked into the distance and she spoke the truth from her heart.

‘But... mistress, do you truly not like him even a little?’ Su Wu asked.

Su Wu could only see mistress’ lost look and her heart hoped mistress would be happy even if it was for a short period.

‘I don’t have the right to talk about love in case I mislead another person,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

Under different circumstances, Tao Tu Yun wouldn’t have come to the Tao

Manor to break the betrothal. She knew the right decision was to let go of Tao Fang Ao and let him find his own happiness.

‘Mistress...’ Su Wu said.

Su Wu felt guilty for broaching the issue mistress didn’t want to be reminded of. The heavens wasn’t fair. Why did the heavens give mistress such a pitiful fate?

‘Su Wu, let’s not talk about this anymore,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘Put the portrait somewhere else then take a stroll with me.’

Tao Tu Yun smiled and walked outside.

A while later Su Wu followed mistress and she didn’t dare to say anything else about Li Tai Fang and Tao Fang Ao, she knew mistress was forcing a smile.

Li Tai Fang and Cui Yu have been standing outside of Tao Fang Ao’s calligraphy room for a few afternoons. They knew Tao Fang Ao forbid anyone to enter the calligraphy room so they didn’t dare anger him by disturbing him.

‘Mistress, how much longer do we need to wait?’ Cui Yu asked. ‘If we wait any longer than the chicken soup will be cold.’

Cui Yu was carefully holding a bowl of chicken soup that mistress asked the cooks to make. Inside the chicken soup were many nutritious herbs to nourish Tao Fang Ao.

‘Don’t be noisy,’ Li Tai Fang said. ‘Even people of the Tao Household don’t dare to disturb Tao Fang Ao while he’s in the calligraphy room. How am I supposed to dare to knock on the door?’

Li Tai Fang had spent the last few days thinking of ways to get closer to Tao Fang Ao and her thick face had turned into a fearful face. She ignored his cold face to be closer to him because she hoped he would fall for her. She didn’t care what schemes she needed to use as long as she possessed his heart.

‘But mistress, my hands can’t hold the bowl any longer,’ Cui Yu said.

Cui Yu had held the bowl for almost half a shichen hour. She didn’t dare to put the bowl on the ground and her two hands were trembling.

‘Close your mouth!’ Li Tai Fang said. ‘Even if you can’t hold it any longer, you

need to endure.'

Li Tai Fang was bothered by Cui Yu's complaints. If Cui Yu ruined her chance of getting Tao Fang Ao's heart then she wouldn't hesitate to punish Cui Yu.

In that moment the tall Tao Fang Ao walked out of the calligraphy room.

'What are you two doing here?' Tang Fang Ao asked.

Tao Fang Ao wrinkled his handsome face and he glared at Li Tai Fang and Cui Yu.

Tao Fang Ao hated the middle days of each month. The last few days he had to check the Tao Household's business account books. He hated checking balances the most. Tao Fang Ling had pushed checking duties to him since Luo Bing Liang was pregnant. Even if he struggled to finish checking balances, he couldn't refuse to perform checking duties.

Li Tai Fang and Cui Yu added to Tao Fang Ao's troubles. The last few days they were outside the calligraphy room during the days he struggled the most. If they didn't conduct themselves properly then he wouldn't allow them to take a step outside the east guest chamber.

'Second master, I asked the cooks to make you chicken soup to nourish your body,' Li Tai Fang said.

Li Tai Fang smiled brightly, stepped in front of Tao Fang Ao and was about to lean into his body but he avoided her.

'Thank you for your good intentions, my heart can't accept,' Tao Fang Ao said.

Tao Fang Ao glanced at Li Tai Fang, she looked troublesome as the account balances.

'But...' Li Tai Fang said.

Li Tai Fang refused to be rejected. She quickly picked up the bowl from Cui Yu's hands and held it in front of Tao Fang Ao.

Tao Fang Ao looked coldly at Li Tai Fang. 'Don't say I didn't warn you. In the future you're not allowed to take one step into my villa otherwise I won't be merciful. And don't follow me anymore unless you two want to immediately leave the Tao Manor.'

Tao Fang Ao didn't bother to take another glance at Li Tai Fang and Cui Yu. He disappeared from his villa, only his warning stayed at his villa.

'Mistress, what are we going to do?' Cui Yu asked softly. 'Did we make a move too soon?'

Cui Yu was scared of mistress' rage.

Li Tai Fang glared at Cui Yu. Cui Yu grabbed the bowl from Li Tai Fang and lowered her head fearfully.

'Why are you still standing here?' Li Tai Fang asked. 'Hurry and leave!'

Li Tai Fang refused to let go of her desire to be Tao Fang Ao's wife, she was forced into the situation.

Cui Yu obediently followed behind mistress. She didn't understand what mistress was thinking. Although the Tao Household was rich, but Tao Fang Ao had a dangerous cold aura. He wasn't a man they should offend. She hoped mistress would soon see common sense.

End of Chapter Two (Part 4 of 4)

Related

part 1



Chapter Three (Part 1)

Su Wu carried a pot of tea to the garden.

Past the fake mountain, Tao Tu Yun and Luo Bing Liang were playing chess.

Su Wu didn't expect mistress and first master's wife would become good friends. Luo Bing Liang often visited mistress to gossip, take strolls together and play chess in the garden near Tao Fang Ao's villa. She put the pot of tea on the table and walked to a pavilion nearby to not disturb mistress and Luo Bing Liang.

'Tu Yun, why are you a good chess player?' Luo Bing Liang praised.

Luo Bing Liang didn't have many chess pieces left and she realised she lost again.

'Thank you Lady Luo,' Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun sipped tea and her body warmed.

White and pink blossom trees were planted around the garden. Tao Tu Yun thought the gentle wind was soothing in the garden that she liked most.

‘Do you like this garden?’ Luo Bing Liang asked. ‘Tao Fang Ao designed this garden. He visits this garden the most.’

‘Did you say he visits this garden the most?’ Tao Tu Yun asked suspiciously.

‘The truth is I want to help you,’ Luo Bing Liang said. ‘Lady Li follows Tao Fang Ao around for days. But you don’t even make an effort to spend time with Tao Fang Ao, which is why I want to find opportunities for you and Tao Fang Ao to spend time together. If my prediction is right then today Tao Fang Ao would have warned Lady Li to stay away from him. When he’s stressed, he comes here to relax.’

Luo Bing Liang thought her plan was good. She thought Tao Tu Yun and Tao Fang Ao made a good couple. She knew Tao Fang Ao like her, couldn’t endure Li Tai Fang’s company.

‘Then do I need to thank you?’ Tao Tu Yun teased.

Tao Tu Yun smiled helplessly, Luo Bing Liang helped to ruin her plan. Tao Tu Yun had hoped that Tao Fang Ao would fall for Lady Li and she could finally leave the Tao Manor.

‘Tu Yun, you don’t need to worry,’ Luo Bing Liang. ‘You have my support.’

Of course Luo Bing Liang would support Tao Tu Yun and Tao Fang Ao’s relationship progressing, she had put all her taels in Tao Tu Yun’s basket. She saw Tao Fang Ao’s tall figure and smiled.

‘Speak of Cao Cao and Cao Cao arrives,’ Luo Bing Liang said.

‘Why are you two together here?’ Tao Fang Ao asked.

‘Tao Fang Ao, you’re here at the right time,’ Luo Bing Liang said. ‘I’m playing chess with Tu Yun. Do you want to sit and watch?’

‘That is a good suggestion,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘On the way here I saw first brother looking for you.’

Luo Bing Liang stood anxiously and Tao Fang Ao happily sat on her seat.

‘Is it true?’ Luo Bing Liang asked. ‘Then you two should stay here and play chess. I’ll leave first.’

Luo Bing Liang quickly left the garden.

‘I didn’t expect you and first sister-in-law would be this compatible,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘You must be enjoying your stay at the Tao Manor having first sister-in-law as company.’

Tao Fang Ao noticed the moment he sat, Tao Tu Yun didn’t even glance once at him.

‘Lady Luo is an interesting person,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘I’m happy to have her as a friend.’

Tao Tu Yun’s eyes admired the tea cup in her hands instead of admiring Tao Fang Ao.

‘It sounds like you’re saying spending time with your betrothed is not enjoyable,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘Is that why since you stepped into my home you wouldn’t willingly glance once at me?’

Tao Fang Ao looked at Tao Tu Yun avoiding eye contact with him and his chest felt angry. He didn’t need to see her face to know she purposely distanced herself from him.

Tao Fang Ao didn’t know why Tao Tu Yun looked for him in Luo Yang Province if she didn’t want to acknowledge their betrothal. Suddenly he remembered what she said on the first day she stayed at the Tao Manor, ‘the truth is the purpose why I came here isn’t for you to honor our betrothal but to break our betrothal.’

Tao Fang Ao didn’t want Tao Tu Yun to be cold toward him.

‘It’s not true,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun’s heart sighed, she raised her head and looked directly at Tao Fang Ao’s eyes.

‘I know you’re busy working and I didn’t want to trouble you,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘When I took strolls around the Tao Manor, I would coincidentally meet Lady Luo and we became acquainted with each other.’

Tao Tu Yun explained why she spent time with Luo Bing Liang, but she didn't understand why Tao Fang Ao looked angry.

Tao Fang Ao didn't know why he was angry about Tao Tu Yun being friendly with Li Tai Fang and cold toward him. What Tao Tu Yun said was true, he was busy overseeing the Tao Household's business and Li Tai Fang following him around was a nuisance to him. But he was more troubled by Tao Tu Yun's indifference. Why Tao Tu Yun didn't at least ask him once about his well-being?

Tao Fang Ao thought it would be reasonable he should be grateful and happy Tao Tu Yun didn't trouble him the way Li Tai Fang did. But he wasn't grateful or happy Tao Tu Yun didn't spend time with him, he was angry she ignored his existence.

'What will you do if I say I don't mind be acquainted with you?' Tao Fang Ao asked.

Tao Fang Ao didn't know why Tao Tu Yun affected his moods more than Li Tai Fang could. He thought Tao Tu Yun's company made his troubles disappear and he couldn't fault Luo Bing Liang for enjoying spending time with Tao Tu Yun.

'What are you suggesting?' Tao Tu Yun asked.

Tao Tu Yun hoped that she misheard Tao Fang Ao's words.

'In the future while I'm working in the calligraphy room, you can sit next to me and read,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'If I'm working outside the Tao Manor then you can accompany me outside.'

Tao Fang Ao gently stroked Tao Tu Yun's cheeks and his voice was putting her under a trance.

Later that afternoon, Tao Fang Ao's calligraphy room was quiet as usual except there was a new small table positioned next to a window and Tao Tu Yun was reading in front of the small table.

Tao Fang Ao was happy he finally finished checking monthly balances. He closed the account books, raised his head and admired Tao Fang Ao's beauty.

'Are you tired of staying here while I work?' Tao Fang Ao asked.

'No, I have history books to occupy me, Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun closed the history book she was reading and smiled at Tao Fang Ao.

‘I haven’t had an opportunity to ask about your family,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘I remember you said you’re from Liu Yue Province. What is it like living there?’

‘My parents are healthy and I’m their only child,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘Liu Yue Province isn’t as lively as Luo Yang Province but everyone in Liu Yue Province works diligently.’

Tao Tu Yun had left Liu Yue Province for more than a month. She missed her family and didn’t know when she could return home.

‘The way you speak shows that your father must have influenced your education,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

‘My father is a teacher in Liu Yue Province,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘He doesn’t care that I’m a female. I’m thankful my father taught me to read and write.’

Tao Fang Ao understood why Tao Tu Yun was worldlier than Li Tai Fang even though Li Tai Fang was from the imperial city.

‘I think I should thank your father,’ Tao Fang Ao said cryptically.

Tao Tu Yun couldn’t read the complex expression on Tao Fang Ao’s face.

‘Are you hungry?’ Tao Fang Ao asked. ‘You’ve been inside the Tao Manor for many days. Do you want to eat an afternoon meal with me at Long Fang Inn?’

‘Are you saying I can go outside the Tao Manor?’ Tao Tu Yun asked.

Tao Tu Yun couldn’t believe what Tao Fang Ao asked.

‘Yes, on the condition you accompany me outside,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

Tao Fang Ao suspected he couldn’t be angry as long as Tao Tu Yun was smiling at him.

‘Can Su Wu come with us?’ Tao Tu Yun asked.

Tao Tu Yun thought Su Wu would be happy if they could spend time together outside the Tao Manor.

‘Yes, I’ll wait in front of the main gate while you ask Su Wu to join us,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

End of Chapter Three (Part 1)

Related

part 2

RFF – Chapter Three (Part 2)



RFF – Summary of Chapter Three (Part 2)

Outside the Tao Manor, Tao Fang Ao (TFA) was pacing back and forth.

The guards were curious who TFA was waiting for, because it was the first time TFA waited for someone.

The guards didn't need to wait long to see their suspicions confirmed, TFA was waiting for Tao Tu Yun (TTY).

TTY and Su Wu (SW) ran toward TFA.

'TFA, I'm sorry I made you wait,' TTY said.

'Let's go,' TFA said and held TTY's hand.

'Wait,' Li Tai Fang (LTF) said.

'TFA, why are favoring TTY?' LTF asked. 'I'm your future wife. You should take

me sightseeing instead of taking TTY.'

'Everyone's hearts know who TFA's real fiancée is,' SW said. 'Besides, TFA likes my mistress, not you.'

'You're only a maid,' LTF said. 'You have no right to speak.'

LTF raised her hand to slap SW. TTY stood in front of SW to protect SW, and LTF's hand changed direction to slap TTY.

'Stop!' TFA said and grabbed LTF's arm to stop LTF from slapping TTY.

'TFA...' LTF called.

LTF's arm felt like it was going to break in half, but TFA's glare was scarier.

'If I see you hit anyone, I won't spare you,' TFA warned.

TFA heard from his servants that LTF dared to hit his servants. If LTF dared to hit his fiancée in front of him, it meant LTF behaved worse behind his back.

TFA let go of LTF. LTF stumbled back and Feng Yu (FY) caught LTF.

'If you want to come with us then follow us,' TFA said coldly.

TFA held TTY's hand and they walked together to the markets.

LTF followed behind TTY and TFA. LTF glared at TTY's back, and LTF vowed to take revenge on TTY.

TFA took TTY to eat at a restaurant in one of his family's inns.

The restaurant was a popular restaurant in the city. The customers who were waiting for a vacant table didn't complain when one man and four women got a table before them, because TFA's family owned the inn.

The customers were curious to see TTY and LTF. They speculated about who was TFA's real fiancée and who was TFA's fake fiancée.

The inn caretaker escorted TFA and his guests to the best table on the third floor.

TTY wanted to sit on the seat furthest away from TFA and LTF.

'TY, sit on my right,' TFA said affectionately.

TTY felt awkward sitting closely next to TFA.

LTF glared at TTY and LTF chose to sit on TFA's left side.

A banquet of elaborate dishes were brought to TFA's table like seafood congee, grilled chicken, beef and pork.

'TY, taste the restaurant's most popular dishes,' TFA said.

TFA put vegetables in his bowl, and TTF put grilled beef in her bowl.

'SW, come sit next to me and eat,' TTF said.

'Mistress, am I allowed to sit and eat with you?' SW asked.

'A maid should know her place,' LTF said. 'Isn't that right FY?'

'Yes, mistress,' FY said and looked at the delicious food on the table enviously.

FY also envied TTF and SW's close friendship unlike hers and LTF's mistress and maid relationship.

'A maid is a person too,' TTF said. 'LTF, you shouldn't belittle another person. I grew up with SW. In my eyes SW is my sister. FY served you for years. I don't believe in your eyes FY is only a maid.'

'Stay out of my relationship with my maid,' LTF warned.

LTF wasn't going to give TTY a chance to act like a mistress with a generous heart in front of TFA.

'You're right,' TTY said. 'I have no right to interfere in your relationship with FY so you have no right to interfere in my relationship with SW. TFA, can SW sit next to me at the table and eat together with us?'

TFA saw that TTY didn't want to fight with LTF. He ate a piece of grilled beef and granted TTY's request.

'Yes, SW can sit and eat with us,' TFA said.

SW happily sat next to TTY, and TTY put a piece of grilled beef into SW's bowl.

FY was envious SW had a good mistress like TTY who treated SW like a sister.

Later that day TFA escorted the women back to the Tao Manor, Tao Fang Ling (TFL) was waiting for him outside his bedchamber.

'Big brother, why do you want to see me?' TFA asked.

‘Nothing important,’ TFL said. ‘I couldn’t find you in your calligraphy room. The guards informed me that you took your two fiances to eat outside.’

‘Big brother, confess,’ TFA said. ‘Did your wife send you here to confirm or deny rumors?’

TFL laughed helplessly and he didn’t deny TFA’s assumption.

‘The truth is I’m curious about your two fiances too,’ TFL said. ‘Have you found out who’s your real fiancée and who’s your fake fiancée yet?’

‘Nothing confirmed yet,’ TFA said. ‘Big brother, you know it’s not important to me who’s my real fiancée and who’s a fake.’

The Tao brothers exchanged a smile with each other. Like TFA, TFL didn’t care about their father’s arranged marriages for them. Luo Bing Liang (LBL) wasn’t TFL’s fiancée, but TFL was adamant about marrying LBL because TFL loved LBL.

The four Tao siblings didn’t care about outsiders seeing them as unfilial and not honoring their father’s wishes. It didn’t matter who their father gave the jade bracelets to, because the four Tao siblings would only marry for love.

End of Chapter Three (Part 2) summary

Related

part 1

RFF – Chapter Four (Part 1)



Tao Tu Yun had a coughing fit in her bedchamber.

‘Mistress, do you want me to ask second master Tao to call a physician to examine you?’ Su Wu asked.

‘No...’ Tao Tu Yun said and coughed. ‘Su Wu, can you get me hot ginger tea? I’ll be alright after I drink ginger tea.’

‘Mistress, you’re severely ill and bedridden,’ Su Wu said. ‘Mistress, you need a physician to examine you.’

‘Su Wu, I only have a small cold from the cold weather,’ Tao Tu Yun lied. ‘Don’t bother Tao Fang Ao over something small.’

Tao Tu Yun suppressed her chest pain and smiled to reassure Su Wu.

‘Yes mistress,’ Su Wu said. ‘Mistress, stay here and rest. I’ll go make you hot ginger tea.’

Su Wu walked to the kitchen, and Li Tai Fang and Feng Yu visited Tao Tu Yun’s bedchamber.

‘Lady Tao, I heard you coughing in the morning,’ Li Tai Fang said. ‘I came to see if you’re well.’

Li Tai Fang and Feng Yu walked into Tao Tu Yun’s bedchamber uninvited. They were happy to see Tao Tu Yun bedridden.

‘Thank you lady Li for caring about my health,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun understood Li Tai Fang was wishing she’d be sick forever.

‘Who said I care about your health?’ Li Tai Fang asked. ‘I only came here to see how long you’ll shamelessly stay in the Tao Manor. You’re a fake, you should stop seducing Tao Fang Ao and leave the Tao Manor.’

Tao Tu Yun suppressed her cough. Her pneumonia was more severe than she expected.

‘Lady Li, I’m sorry,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘I’m sick. Can you please be quiet so I can rest?’

‘You...’ Li Tai Fang said.

‘Lady Tao, are you in your bedchamber?’ elder Jiang asked.

Li Tai Fang walked to the door, and closed the door behind her so elder Jiang couldn’t see the bedridden Tao Tu Yun.

‘Elder Jiang, is something wrong?’ Li Tai Fang asked innocently.

‘Oh... lady Li, you’re here too,’ elder Jiang said. ‘Second master Tao, invited lady Tao and lady Li to eat dinner in his courtyard.’

Elder Jiang was suspicious why Li Tai Fang was standing guard in front of Tao Tu Yun’s bedchamber.

‘Lady Tao is feeling unwell,’ Li Tai Fang said. ‘Elder Jiang, I’ll go meet Tao Fang Ao first.’

‘Is lady Tao severely ill?’ elder Jiang asked. ‘Does she need a physician?’

Elder Jiang looked suspiciously at the closed doors behind Li Tai Fang. He was worried something bad happened to Tao Tu Yun.

‘Elder Jiang, you don’t need to worry,’ Li Tai Fang said. ‘Lady Tao is only tired. After a nap she’ll be well again. We shouldn’t disturb her sleep.’

‘I don’t want to disturb lady Tao’s sleep,’ elder Jiang said. ‘I’ll escort lady Li to second master Tao’s courtyard.’

Li Tai Fang was jealous why everyone at the Tao Manor loved Tao Tu Yun but hated her.

Tao Tu Yun heard everything from her bed. She didn’t expose Li Tai Fang’s lies because if she and Tao Fang Ao weren’t meant to be, it was better if they didn’t see each other.

Tao Tu Yun wanted to know when she could leave the Tao Manor because she was running out of time.

At night, Su Wu checked up on Tao Tu Yun. She touched Tao Tu Yun’s forehead, Tao Tu Yun had a fever.

Su Wu ran to find elder Jiang. Elder Jiang immediately called a physician.

The servants gathered outside Tao Tu Yun’s bedchamber because they were worried about her.

‘What happened?’ Tao Fang Ao asked. ‘Why is everyone standing here instead of sleeping?’

‘Second master Tao,’ Xiao Hong greeted. ‘Su Wu woke up elder Jiang. Su Wu told elder Jiang, Lady Tao has a fever. We came here to see if we can help lady Tao.’

Xiao Hong and Su Wu became friends after Su Wu came to the Tao Manor. Xiao Hong got to know Tao Tu Yun through Su Wu. Xiao Hong and all the other servants loved Tao Tu Yun.

‘What?’ Tao Fang Ao asked. ‘Move out of the way!’

Xiao Hong and the other servants were surprised to see how worried their second master Tao was about Tao Tu Yun.

Tao Fang Ao squeezed through the crowd and into Tao Tu Yun's bedchamber. He knew the servants liked Tao Tu Yun more than Li Tai Fang, but he didn't know the servants cared enough about Tao Tu Yun to sacrifice sleep.

'Didn't I tell everyone to wait outside or go back to sleep... second master Tao,' elder Jiang said.

'How is Tu Yun?' Tao Fang Ao asked.

Tao Fang Ao sat on the bed next to Tao Tu Yun. He was worried to see her cheeks were fever red.

'Second master Tao, lady Tao has a high fever,' the physician said. 'I gave lady Tao an herbal remedy to reduce her fever. But her pneumonia is severe.'

'Elder Jiang, escort the physician outside,' Tao Fang Ao instructed.

Tao Fang Ao touched the wet cloth on Tao Tu Yun's forehead.

'Su Wu, get a colder cloth for Tu Yun,' Tao Fang Ao instructed.

Tao Fang Ao sat on Tao Tu Yun's bed the whole night.

In the morning, Tao Fang Ao walked outside Tao Tu Yun's bedchamber to get fresh air.

Li Tai Fang stopped by Tao Tu Yun's courtyard to see if Tao Tu Yun was dead yet. Li Tai Fang was jealous to see Tao Fang Ao stayed in Tao Tu Yun's bedchamber the whole night.

'Second master Tao, what are you doing here this early in the morning?' Li Tai Fang asked innocently.

'I didn't leave,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'I stayed here last night.'

Tao Fang Ao didn't need to know who his real fiancée was because he made a choice who he wanted to marry. It wasn't the black hearted Li Tai Fang.

'Second master Tao, it seems like you care about lady Tao,' Li Tai Fang said spitefully.

'Tu Yun is my fiancée,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'It's my duty to care about my fiancée.'

'Second master Tao, are you accusing me of being the fake?' Li Tai Fang asked.

‘I warned you from the start that I’ll find out who’s my real fiancée,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

Su Wu ran outside Tao Tu Yun’s bedchamber.

‘Second master Tao, mistress is awake,’ Su Wu said.

Su Wu’s smile disappeared after seeing Li Tai Fang outside Tao Tu Yun’s bedchamber.

‘Su Wu, quickly go get Tu Yun’s medicine and a meal,’ Tao Tu Yun instructed.

Tao Fang Ao ran back to Tao Tu Yun’s bedchamber, and Su Wu ran to the kitchen.

Li Tai Fang was angry Tao Fang Ao and Su Wu dismissed her. Li Tai Fang was going to find a way to kick Tao Tu Yun out of the Tao Manor and separate Tao Tu Yun from Tao Fang Ao.

End of Chapter Four (Part 1)

Related

part 2

RFF – Chapter Four (Part 2)



Tao Fang Ao ran into Tao Tu Yun's bedchamber and saw her sitting hunched over on the bed having a coughing fit. She looked pale like she was going to disappear.

Tao Fang Ao sat on Tao Tu Yun's bed. He touched her forehead and was relieved her fever was gone.

'Are you in pain?' Tao Fang Ao asked. 'Do you want me to call you a physician?'

'I'm well,' Tao Tu Yun said. 'I don't need a physician.'

Tao Fang Ao's closeness made Tao Tu Yun feel awkward. She heard Su Wu recount how everyone at the Tao Manor were worried about including Tao Fang Ao.

'Thank you for taking care of me last night,' Tao Tu Yun said.

'If you know you're sick, you should have asked Su Wu to tell me to call you a physician,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'You should fix your fear of inconveniencing other people.'

Tao Fang Ao didn't want to scold Tao Tu Yun when she was sick. But he heard Su Wu told him how Tao Tu Yun considered herself a guest and Tao Tu Yun didn't want to wear out her guest status made him angry. In his eyes, Tao Tu Yun was his family.

‘Thank you...’ Tao Tu Yun said and coughed.

Tao Tu Yun smiled. Her smile didn’t reassure Tao Fang Ao, it hurt his heart.

Tao Fang Ao stood and turned around to see why it took a long time for Su Wu to get medicine and a meal for Tao Tu Yun. Luckily, Su Wu opened the door and brought a tray into the bedchamber. He sat back on the bed and accepted the tray from Su Wu.

‘You can leave,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘I’ll take care of Tu Yun.’

Su Wu was happy to see Tao Fang Ao taking care of Tao Tu Yun.

Tao Tu Yun signalled Su Wu to take over from Tao Fang Ao, but Su Wu quietly left the bedchamber.

‘Tu Yun, you’re still weak,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘Let me take care of you.’

Tao Fang Ao put the tray on the table. He picked up the bowl of hot congee, scooped a spoonful of congee, blew on the congee and signalled for Tao Tu Yun to open her mouth.

Tao Tu Yun conceded. She opened her mouth and Tao Fang Ao slowly fed her the bowl of congee. Then he fed her medicine and helped her lie down on the bed.

‘Tu Yun, you need sleep,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

Tao Fang Ao stayed with Tao Tu Yun until he thought she was asleep.

Tao Tu Yun heard Tao Fang Ao closed the doors and she sighed. She was worried about Tao Fang Ao’s attachment toward her.

Tao Tu Yun took a nap. When she opened her eyes, she was shocked to see Tao Fang Ao sitting at the table next to her bed reading a book.

‘Tu Yun, you’re awake,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘Are you feeling better?’

‘Were you here the whole time?’ Tao Tu Yun asked.

Tao Tu Yun’s heart hurt. She couldn’t stay at the Tao Manor any longer.

‘Yes,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘What’s wrong with me being here?’

Tao Fang Ao wouldn’t get any work done if he didn’t stay by Tao Tu Yun’s

bedside to watch over her.

‘Aren’t you busy?’ Tao Tu Yun asked.

‘Even if I’m busy, I need time to rest too,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

Su Wu knocked on the door.

‘Mistress, first master Tao’s wife made you a bowl of nutritious soup,’ Su Wu said.

Su Wu passed the bowl of soup to Tao Fang Ao and he slowly fed the soup to Tao Tu Yun.

Tao Tu Yun couldn’t sleep while Tao Fang Ao sat at the table reading.

‘Second master Tao...’ Tao Tu Yun called.

‘What’s wrong?’ Tao Fang Ao asked.

‘Lady Li is your guest too,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘Shouldn’t you visit lady Li too?’

Tao Fang Ao frowned and put the book on the table.

‘What are you implying?’ Tao Fang Ao asked.

‘You must be bored taking care of someone sick like me,’ Tao Tu Yun said.
‘You’ll have a better time with lady Li...’

Tao Fang Ao stood abruptly and walked to Tao Tu Yun’s bed.

‘Are you chasing me away?’ Tao Fang Ao asked.

‘No... I’m worried you’ll be bored,’ Tao Tu Yun denied.

Tao Tu Yun looked away from Tao Fang Ao’s intense eyes. She didn’t want him to see her through her heart.

Tao Fang Ao sat back at the table.

‘I’m not bored,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘You should sleep, it’ll help you recover faster.’

Tao Tu Yun closed her eyes. She didn’t want Tao Fang Ao to continue worrying about her.

Half a shichen hour later, Tao Tu Yun fell asleep again.

Tao Fang Ao sat on Tao Tu Yun's bed and watched her sleep for a while. Of course he could feel she reciprocated his feelings. He wasn't going to let her push him away.

'Tu Yun, I don't care if you push me away,' Tao Fang Ao whispered in Tao Tu Yun's ear. 'I'm not going to let you run away from your feelings.'

After three days of bed rest, Tao Tu Yun felt well enough to take a walk around Tao Fang Ao's favorite garden with Su Wu.

Luo Bing Liang was waiting for Tao Tu Yun in the garden.

'Tu Yun, come and sit with me,' Luo Bing Liang said.

On the table were food and different hot teas.

Xiao Cheng helped Tao Tu Yun sit next to Luo Bing Liang.

'Lady Tao, drink the tea I brewed,' Xiao Cheng said. 'It's good to drink tea when you're sick.'

'Bing Liang, is there something you want to talk to me about?' Tao Tu Yun asked.

'Nothing important,' Luo Bing Liang said. 'I heard you're feeling better, and I wanted to invite you here to get fresh air with me.'

'Thank you for worrying about me,' Tao Tu Yun said.

'I heard Tao Fang Ao visits you every day,' Luo Bing Liang said. 'It looks like you're someone important in his heart. He cares about you more than lady Li.'

Luo Bing Liang wanted Tao Tu Yun to be her sister-in-law.

'Bing Liang, I'm sorry to disappoint you,' Tao Tu Yun said. 'There is nothing between him and me.'

Tao Tu Yun avoided Luo Bing Liang's eyes. She didn't want Luo Bing Liang to see that she was lying.

'Why not?' Luo Bing Liang asked. 'You're his real fiancée. Didn't you come here to marry him?'

'Bing Liang, how can you be certain I'm not a fake?' Tao Tu Yun asked. 'What if I'm here for his money?'

Luo Bing Liang smiled cryptically.

‘Bing Liang...’ Tao Tu Yun said.

‘Tu Yun, if you’re here for his money then you wouldn’t avoid him,’ Luo Bing Liang said. ‘You would do everything to get closer to him and gain his trust. Think about it logically, how can you get his money if you distant yourself from him?’

Luo Bing Ling didn’t understand why Tao Tu Yun acted like an outsider and let another woman get close to Tao Fang Ao.

Tao Tu Yun knew Luo Bing Ling was an intelligent person. She needed to think of a good excuse to make Luo Bing Ling believe her lies.

‘Bing Ling, you’re wrong,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘My tactic worked. Keeping my distance from him made him curious about me. Why else would he let me visit his favorite garden and take me sightseeing?’

Luo Bing Liang sighed.

‘Tu Yun, why does it feel like you’re purposely talking in circles with me?’ Luo Bing Liang asked. ‘Regardless, I want you to be my sister-in-law.’

Luo Bing Liang wasn’t blind. She could see Tao Tu Yun and Tao Fang Ao cared about each other, but she didn’t understand why Tao Tu Yun wouldn’t admit the truth.

‘Tu Yun, believe me,’ Luo Bing Liang said. ‘An arranged marriage isn’t binding for a man like Tao Fang Ao.’

‘What do you mean?’ Tao Tu Yun asked.

‘Tu Yun, you’ve spent enough time with Tao Fang Ao to understand him,’ Luo Bing Liang said. ‘Unless he has feelings toward you, he wouldn’t marry you because his father arranged the marriage. No one can force him to do something he doesn’t want to do.’

‘Are you saying even if I’m a fake, he’ll still marry me?’ Tao Tu Yun asked.

‘Yes,’ Luo Bing Liang said. ‘I’m not Tao Fang Ling’s fiancée. But he married me because he loves me. Tao Fang Ling’s siblings are like him, they’ll only marry for love.’

Luo Bing Liang gaged Tao Tu Yun’s facial expressions. If Tao Tu Yun was a fake, Tao Tu Yun would be ecstatic to hear her words of comfort instead of looking aghast.

Tao Tu Yun couldn’t stay in the Tao Manor another day. She needed to leave before Tao Fang Ao found out she was his real fiancée.

End of Chapter Four (Part 2)

Related

part 1

RFF – Chapter Five (Part 1)



‘In the future Tu Yun will be living here,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘Big sister-in-law, Tu Yun is still weak. I’ll take her back to her bedchamber to rest.’

Tao Fang Ao held Tao Tu Yun’s hand and he glared at Luo Bing Liang for

putting Tao Tu Yun's health at risk.

'Xiao Cheng, look at your second master Tao,' Luo Bing Liang said. 'Now his eyes can only see Tu Yun. He even glared at me for inviting Tu Yun outside for fresh air. Should I tell your first master Tao that your second master Tao disrespected me?'

Xiao Cheng was stuck in the middle between Luo Bing Liang and Tao Fang Ao.

'Mistress, if you tell first master Tao, he'll say that you shouldn't interfere in second master Tao's business,' Xiao Cheng said. 'Besides, isn't second master Tao falling for lady Tao what you wanted?'

'I changed my mind,' Luo Bing Liang said. 'Your second master Tao doesn't deserve a good woman like Tu Yun. I regret helping him pursue Tu Yun.'

'Mistress, I should take you back to first master Tao,' Xiao Cheng said. 'First master Tao will worry if mistress is outside too long.'

'Alright,' Luo Bing Liang said. 'Let's go.'

Xiao Cheng helped Luo Bing Liang stand, and Luo Bing Liang winked at Tao Tu Yun.

Tao Tu Yun sighed. She understood Luo Bing Liang left to give her and Tao Fang Ao privacy.

'Why aren't you coming with me to your bedchamber?' Tao Fang Ao asked.

Tao Fang Ao hated Tao Tu Yun keeping her distance from him.

'It's rude of us to walk away from Bing Liang,' Tao Tu Yun said.

'I shouldn't let you spend too much time with big sister-in-law,' Tao Fang Ao whispered in Tao Tu Yun's ear.

Tao Fang Ao enclosed Tao Tu Yun's hands in his hands and he blew hot air onto her hands.

'You're too close,' Tao Tu Yun said.

'You're still sick,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'You shouldn't be outside for too long.'

Tao Fang Ao kissed Tao Tu Yun's hands and she blushed.

A maid coughed awkwardly and Tao Tu Yun felt like Tao Fang Ao putting her in a compromising position ruined her reputation.

Tao Tu Yun hid her face on Tao Fang Ao's chest. She hoped in vain that the maid didn't recognise her.

Tao Fang Ao smiled at Tao Tu Yun's failed attempt at hiding herself. Anyone of his servants could recognise Tao Tu Yun's hair style. He felt it was natural for him to kiss her and hug her in front of people.

'I'll take you back to your bedchamber,' Tao Fang Ao said.

Tao Fang Ao wrapped an arm around Tao Tu Yun's shoulder and escorted her back to her bedchamber. He took no notice of Li Tai Feng who was glaring in their direction from a distance.

A couple of days later, Tao Tu Yun sat next to her open bedchamber window and let the breezes into her bedchamber. She didn't feel the cold.

'Mistress, why did you open the window?' Su Wu asked. 'What if you catch another cold?'

Su Wu closed the window. She helped Tao Tu Yun sit on the bed, draped a blanket around Tao Tu Yun's shoulders and put a cup of warm tea in Tao Tu Yun's cold hands.

Tao Tu Yun stared blankly at the cup of tea in her hands.

'Mistress, the last couple of days you haven't been yourself,' Su Wu said. 'Does it have anything to do with second master Tao?'

'Su Wu, you understand me the most,' Tao Tu Yun said. 'You know why I'm troubled.'

Tao Tu Yun understood if Tao Fang Ao kissed and hugged her in front of his servants, it meant his feelings for her were serious. She was conflicted. If she shouldn't return his feelings then she shouldn't mislead him.

'Mistress, can you say you don't have feelings for second master Tao?' Su Wu asked. 'Everyone can see that he cares about you.'

Su Wu heard the rumors from the servants that Tao Fang Ao wanted to marry Tao Tu Yun.

‘Which is why I can’t stay here,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

‘What?’ Su Wu asked. ‘Mistress, didn’t you say you wanted to leave the Tao Manor honorably. Mistress, don’t you want to wait until your reputation is restored?’

‘I’m scared when the truth is exposed, I can’t leave,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘Su Wu, can you go pack our belongings? We’ll leave at the right opportunity.’

‘But...’ Su Wu said.

Su Wu didn’t want Tao Tu Yun to be sadder so she swallowed her protest. She understood why Tao Tu Yun couldn’t stay. Why did the heavens need to be cruel to good people like Tao Tu Yun?

‘Lady Tao are you inside?’ elder Jiang asked from the door.

Su Wu opened the door and greeted elder Jiang.

‘Elder Jiang, do you need to see mistress?’ Su Wu asked.

‘Second master Tao invited lady Tao for a game of chess,’ elder Jiang said.

Tao Tu Yun walked slowly to the door and coughed a little to decline Tao Fang Ao’s invitation.

‘Elder Jiang, I’m not feeling well,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘I’m resting today. Please tell your second master Tao that I’m sorry I’m not well enough to play chess.’

‘I’ll inform second master Tao,’ elder Jiang said. ‘Lady Tao, do you want me to call a physician?’

‘No,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘I still have bags of herbal remedies I haven’t opened.’

Tao Tu Yun didn’t want elder Jiang to call a physician for nothing, and she didn’t want Tao Fang Ao to suspect she was avoiding him.

‘I hope lady Tao will get well soon,’ elder Jiang said. ‘I’m going to see second master Tao now.’

‘Elder Jiang, wait,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘Are you going to the markets?’

‘Yes,’ elder Jiang said. ‘Lady Tao, do you want me to buy anything for you?’

Elder Jiang hoped that Tao Tu Yun would marry Tao Fang Ao, because he knew

Tao Tu Yun would be a good mistress to everyone at the Tao Manor.

‘No,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘Elder Jiang, trust me. When you’re at the markets, if you hear someone call your name, do not turn around or stop. Remember to keep walking.’

Elder Jiang was surprised by Tao Tu Yun’s warning, but the seriousness in her eyes showed him that she wasn’t jesting.

‘Lady Tao...’ elder Jiang said.

‘Elder Jiang, remember my warning,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun closed the door, and left elder Jiang standing confused on the same spot for a while.

After elder Jiang left, Su Wu opened the door to let fresh air in.

‘Mistress, you shouldn’t put elder Jiang’s life on your shoulders,’ Su Wu said.

‘But I can’t stand by and let something bad happen to elder Jiang,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

Su Wu sighed. Her mistress’ heart was too kind. She saw Tao Fang Ao walking toward her mistress’ bedchamber and she smiled.

‘Mistress, it looks like you can’t avoid fate even if you wanted to,’ Su Wu teased.

Tao Fang Ao walked toward Tao Tu Yun and he frowned.

‘Tu Yun, didn’t you say you’re unwell?’ Tao Fang Ao asked. ‘What are you doing standing at the door on a windy day?’

‘I... we can talk inside,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun turned around and avoided the scrutiny in Tao Fang Ao’s eyes.

Tao Fang Ao followed Tao Tu Yun into her bedchamber and they sat at a table. He looked around her bedchamber and became suspicious why all the furnishings looked neat and tidy like they were untouched.

‘Are you used to living here yet?’ Tao Fang Ao asked.

‘Your home isn’t my home,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘There’s no reason for me to get

used to living here.'

Tao Fang Ao poured warm tea into Tao Tu Yun's cup and he smiled like he didn't hear her.

'Tu Yun, if you're bored here,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'I can take you sightseeing.'

Tao Fang Ao hated Tao Tu Yun talk as though she was going to leave him.

Tao Tu Yun walked to the open window.

'No...' Tao Tu Yun said.

Suddenly Tao Tu Yun had a coughing fit and pressed a hand over her constricted heart.

Tao Fang Ao rushed to Tao Tu Yun's side and he held her in his arms.

'What's wrong?' Tao Fang Ao asked. 'Where are you feeling pain?'

Tao Fang Ao's heart ache to see Tao Tu Yun's whitened face and to feel her frail body in his arms like she would disappear if he let go of her body.

Tao Tu Yun suppressed another sharp heart pain. It was her fault for interfering with the fates of people around her.

End of Chapter Five (Part 1)

Related

part 2

RFF – Chapter Five (Part 2)



Tao Tu Yun cared about her imperfect fiancé. Her hands naturally held his cheeks. She wished she had more time, but they weren't meant to be.

'Tu Yun...' Tao Fang Ao called.

Tao Tu Yun fainted in Tao Fang Ao's arms. He carried her to the bed, and ran outside to instruct a maid to call a physician.

A shichen hour later, the physician examined Tao Tu Yun.

'Second master Tao, lady Tao's heart is beating erratically,' the physician said. 'I'll give her an herbal remedy to reduce her heartbeat.'

'Are you certain Tu Yun will be alright?' Tao Fang Ao asked. 'Before she fainted in my arms, she had heart pain.'

The physician knew Tao Tu Yun was Tao Fang Ao's future wife so the physician wasn't surprised Tao Fang Ao was worried about Tao Tu Yun's health.

'Second master Tao, I'm certain lady Tao doesn't have a heart condition,' the physician said.

‘Thank you,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘A maid will escort you outside.’

The physician left and Tao Fang Ao stood guard by Tao Tu Yun’s bedside. Tao Fang Ao wanted to stay with Tao Tu Yun until she woke up, but elder Jiang ran into the bedchamber looking for Tao Tu Yun. Tao Fang Ao signalled elder Jiang to follow him into the courtyard so they wouldn’t disturb Tao Tu Yun.

In the courtyard, elder Jiang recounted what happened at the markets to Tao Fang Ao.

‘Elder Jiang, say it again but calmly,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

‘Second master Tao, before I left the Tao Manor, lady Tao knew I was going to the markets even though I didn’t tell anyone,’ elder Jiang said. ‘Lady Tao warned me when I’m at the markets if someone calls my name then I shouldn’t turn around and I should keep walking. At that time I didn’t know what lady Tao meant, but she didn’t look like she was jesting...’

Elder Jiang rubbed his pounding heart. He was grateful toward Tao Tu Yun for warning him otherwise he wouldn’t be alive.

‘I walked toward the markets,’ elder Jiang said. ‘I heard someone calling my name. I wanted to turn around, but I remembered lady Tao’s warning so I walked faster. At a distance I heard someone screamed. I turned around, it was an innocent man lying dead on the ground. The dead man’s head was bleeding. Above the dead man was a drunk man drinking on the balcony. The drunk man had dropped a wine jar on top of the innocent man’s head and killed the innocent man.’

Elder Jiang understood if Tao Tu Yun didn’t warn him then the innocent man who died would have been him.

‘Elder Jiang, are you saying Tu Yun predicted the future?’ Tao Fang Ao asked.

Tao Fang Ao remembered what happened on the first day he met Tao Tu Yun. He heard there were two young women who weren’t locals had warn a cook about a fire. He suspected they were Tao Tu Yun and Su Wu. Did Tao Tu Yun suddenly fainting had a connection to her warning elder Jiang about the future?

‘Yes,’ elder Jiang said.

‘Go bring Su Wu here,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

Elder Jiang found Su Wu talking with Xiao Hong in the kitchen, because Su Wu had wanted to give Tao Fang Ao and Tao Tu Yun privacy.

‘Second master Tao, where is mistress?’ Su Wu asked. ‘I thought you were with mistress.’

‘Your mistress and I were talking then she suddenly fainted,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

‘What?’ Su Wu asked. ‘I knew it. But mistress wouldn’t listen to me, and risked her life to save other people.’

‘Explain what happened calmly,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

‘Mistress... she was born with a gift, she can see the future,’ Su Wu said. ‘At the age of sixteen, mistress met a master sage. The sage warned mistress that because she interfered in the fates of other people, she was going to pay with her life at a young age.’

Tao Fang Ao was scared of losing Tao Tu Yun. He knew Tao Tu Yun was a kind person, and would risk her life to save other people.

‘Su Wu, promise me that you won’t tell another person what you told me about Tu Yun otherwise you’ll put her life in danger,’ Tao Fang Ao warned. ‘Elder Jiang, you can’t tell anyone about Tu Yun’s gift either.’

Tao Fang Ao didn’t want anyone to take advantage of Tao Tu Yun’s gift and he didn’t want to lose her.

‘Second master Tao, I understand,’ Su Wu said. ‘Can I go see mistress?’

‘I’ll take care of Tu Yun,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘Go and see if Tu Yun’s herbal remedy is brewed yet.’

Tao Fang Ao walked back into Tao Tu Yun’s bedchamber. He sat on her bed. He didn’t expect someone who looked frail could predict the future, and didn’t know whether she was kind hearted or foolish.

Tao Tu Yun opened her eyes, and felt disorientated.

‘Tu Yun, are you in pain?’ Tao Fang Ao asked.

‘What happened?’ Tao Tu Yun asked.

Tao Tu Yun turned her head to shake off Tao Fang Ao's hand on her forehead. She hoped he didn't see her feelings the moment before she fainted.

Tao Fang Ao remembered how fragile Tao Tu Yun felt in her arms.

'Tu Yun, is there something you want to tell me?' Tao Fang Ao asked.

'I...' Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Fang Ao saw Tao Tu Yun avoid his eyes and he sighed.

'Su Wu explained to me about your gift,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'Tu Yun, don't you know it's dangerous to interfere with fate? You shouldn't risk your life.'

Tao Tu Yun was grateful Su Wu didn't tell Tao Fang Ao that she was going to die soon.

'I can't stand by and watch people suffer,' Tao Tu Yun said.

'How many people do you think you can save with your body?' Tao Fang Ao asked. 'Can't you see how weak your body is? You...'

Tao Fang Ao saw Tao Tu Yun lowered her head so he calmed himself down.

Tao Fang Ao hugged Tao Tu Yun and he signed.

'Tu Yun, tell me what I should do with you,' Tao Fang Ao whispered Tao Tu Yun's ear.

Tao Tu Yun's eyes stung. She believed Luo Bing Liang's words, Tao Fang Ao didn't care about arranged marriages because he would only marry for love.

Tao Tu Yun regretted she couldn't marry Tao Fang Ao because her life was ending soon.

End of Chapter Five (Part 2)

Related

part 1

RFF Chapter Six (Part 1)



Outside the Zhang Manor gates, the red lanterns were replaced by white lanterns. Inside the Zhang Manor, people were crying around a coffin.

‘The heavens are cruel... why take away the Zhang Household’s only son?’ madam Zhang asked.

‘Madam Zhang, it was the drunk man’s fault,’ the Zhang caretaker said. ‘A wine jar fell on top of master Zhang’s head and killed master Zhang. It was an accident, the magistrate didn’t arrest him. But I ordered someone to kill him.’

‘You did a good job,’ madam Zhang said. ‘A life for a life. His family needs to feel the same pain I feel.’

‘Madam Zhang, I heard a rumor about master Zhang’s death,’ the Zhang caretaker said.

‘What’s the rumor?’ madam Zhang asked.

‘I heard master Zhang was a substitute for elder Jiang,’ the Zhang caretaker said. ‘Elder Jiang would have died instead of master Zhang if someone didn’t forewarn elder Jiang.’

‘Did you say my son died in someone else’s place?’ madam Zhang asked.

‘Yes madam Zhang,’ the Zhang caretaker said. ‘I heard the person who forewarned elder Jiang was Tao Fang Ao’s fiancée, Tao Tu Yun.’

‘I don’t care who she is,’ madam Zhang said. ‘She has to pay for my son’s death.’

At the Tao Manor, Tao Tu Yun and Su Wu sneaked to the back entrance of the Tao Manor.

‘Mistress, do we have to sneak outside the Tao Manor?’ Su Wu asked.

Su Wu clutched the bags in her arms. Although it was a good opportunity to leave the Tao Manor, she was still scared that she and Tao Tu Yun would get caught leaving.

‘There’s no other way,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘We need to sneak outside the Tao Manor in the middle of the night, because the Tao Manor is heavily guarded during the day.’

‘Mistress, Xiao Hong and the others will be upset that we left without saying farewell.’

Su Wu sighed and followed Tao Tu Yun outside the Tao Manor into a bamboo forest.

‘Mistress, we’re outside Luo Yang province,’ Su Wu said.

‘Let’s take a rest here before we continue on our journey,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun looked at the faint lantern lights of the Tao Manor in the distance, and she felt conflicted.

Suddenly an assassin jumped in front of Tao Tu Yun and Su Wu.

‘What a pity you two weren’t be alive for long to continue your journey,’ the assassin said and held a sword at Tao Tu Yun’s chest.

‘Who are you?’ Su Wu asked in a shaky voice. ‘What do you want?’

‘Someone paid me to kill you two,’ the assassin said. ‘I’ll make your deaths painless if you two cooperate.’

‘It’s me who you want to kill,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘You can take my life. This has nothing to do with Su Wu. Let Su Wu go.’

‘Mistress, I’m not leaving you,’ Su Wu said and cried. ‘Mistress, if you die, I’m dying with you.’

Su Wu held Tao Tu Yun’s hand and shook her head. She wasn’t going to abandon Tao Tu Yun.

‘Don’t worry,’ the assassin said. ‘Neither of you will leave this place.’

Tao Tu Yun pushed Su Wu out of the way. But they both fell on the ground and the assassin’s sword struck Tao Tu Yun’s chest. Then Tao Tu Yun and Su Wu played dead.

The assassin saw blood on Tao Tu Yun and Su Wu’s chests and thought they were dead so the assassin left the bamboo forest.

‘Help!’ Su Wu cried out. ‘Someone save my mistress!’

Tao Fang Ao appeared out of nowhere.

‘Second master Tao... save my mistress,’ Su Wu pleaded.

Tao Fang Ao suppressed his panic when he saw Tao Tu Yun’s bleeding chest. He pressed on Tao Tu Yun’s vital acupuncture points so she wouldn’t lose more blood.

‘I’m taking Tu Yun back to the Tao Manor,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

Tao Fang Ao carried Tao Tu Yun back to the Tao Manor.

The next morning, the lively atmosphere at the Tao Manor turned somber.

Tao Fang Ling and Luo Bing Liang waited anxiously inside Tao Tu Yun’s bedchamber with Tao Fang Ao while a physician examined Tao Tu Yun’s chest wound.

‘Tao Fang Ao, what do you think happened to Tu Yun?’ Luo Bing Liang asked. ‘I can’t think of one reason why anyone would want to kill Tu Yun and Su Wu.’

‘I’m in the dark like everyone else,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

Tao Fang Ao looked worriedly at Tao Tu Yun lying on the bed. If he didn’t wake up in the middle of the night, he was scared to think about what would have happened to Tao Tu Yun.

Tao Fang Ao was grateful he rode on horseback last night to help him sleep. If

he didn't then he wouldn't have heard Su Wu's call for help, and he wouldn't have saved Tao Tu Yun in time. But he regretted he didn't find Tao Tu Yun sooner so she wouldn't be injured. He didn't know if Tao Tu Yun would wake up.

Tao Fang Ao remembered how much Tao Tu Yun's chest bled, and his heart tightened.

'Everyone shouldn't worry too much,' the physician said. 'Lady Tao is a lucky person. She wore a jade pendant around her neck, and it protected her heart. The jade pendant stopped the sword from piercing her heart. But she lost a lot of blood. If second master Tao didn't bring her back here in time, her life would have been lost.'

'Thank you,' Tao Fang Ao said and gripped the two halves of the jade pendant in his hands.

'Second master Tao, it's my duty,' the physician said. 'Lady Tao can keep her life. But her chest wound is deep. She'll be unconscious for at least a couple of days. I'll leave an herbal remedy for you to apply on her chest wound so she won't get a chest infection.'

A maid escorted the physician outside, and another maid walked into the bedchamber.

'Second master Tao, I brought a new dress for lady Tao,' the maid said.

'Tao Fang Ao, Bing Liang, you two wait outside while I help change Tu Yun's dress,' Luo Bing Liang said.

Tao Bing Liang walked outside the bedchamber first. Tao Fang Ao took another look at Tao Tu Yun's bloodied dress, and he vowed to take revenge on the person who injured his woman.

End of Chapter Six (Part 1)

Related

part 2

RFF – Chapter Six (Part 2)



Tao Fang Ao interrogated Su Wu.

‘Tell me what happened,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘Who injured Tu Yun?’

‘Second brother, you’re scaring Su Wu,’ Tao Fang Ling said.

‘I... mistress and I headed east after we left Luo Yang province,’ Su Wu said in a shaky voice. ‘An assassin suddenly appeared. The assassin wanted to kill mistress. Mistress pleaded with the assassin to let me go. When the assassin’s sword was about to strike us, mistress pushed me out of the way. We fell on the ground. The assassin’s sword... struck mistress chest.’

Tao Fang Ao looked at the two halves of the jade pendant in his hands. If the assassin knew Tao Tu Yun was still alive, the assassin would return to kill Tao Tu Yun.

‘Second master Tao, is mistress alive?’ Su Wu asked.

‘Tu Yun’s alive,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘It’s this broken jade pendant that saved her life. If she didn’t wear it last night then the assassin’s sword would have pierced

through her heart.'

'Jade pendant?' Su Wu asked. 'The master sage is indeed a master sage. The master sage gave this jade pendant to mistress when she was sixteen, and warned her to always wear this jade pendant because it'll save her life.'

'Second brother, what is Su Wu talking about?' Tao Fang Ling asked.

Luo Bing Liang walked outside the bedchamber and she overheard Su Wu.

'Tao Fang Ao, tell us what happened,' Luo Bing Liang said.

'Su Wu, go take care of Tu Yun,' Tao Fang Ao instructed.

'Yes second master Tao,' Su Wu said and walked into the bedchamber.

'Sooner or later you two would have found out,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'I need you two to help me take revenge for Tu Yun.'

Tao Fang Ling and Luo Bing Liang listened carefully to Tao Fang Ao's plan.

Three days later, Tao Tu Yun woke up.

'Mistress, you're finally awake,' Su Wu said happily.

'I... didn't die?' Tao Tu Yun asked weakly.

Tao Tu Yun remembered her chest pain after the assassin's sword struck her chest. She thought she had died.

'Mistress, you're alive,' Su Wu said. 'Don't mention dying again. Mistress, you gave me a scare.'

'Su Wu, I'm sorry,' Tao Tu Yun said and smiled apologetically. 'Where am I?'

'Mistress, this is second master Tao's bedchamber,' Su Wu said. 'Second master Tao insisted moving mistress to his bedchamber.'

Tao Tu Yun was surprised she returned to the Tao Manor. She understood Tao Fang Ao wasn't going to let her escape again.

'Mistress, you were unconscious for three days,' Su Wu said. 'I'll go cook a meal for mistress.'

Su Wu walked to the door and Tao Fang Ao's sudden appearance startled her.

'Second master Tao,' Su Wu greeted.

Tao Fang Ao saw Tao Tu Yun feigning sleep on the bed and he smiled.

Su Wu wisely left and closed the doors to give Tao Fang Ao and Tao Tu Yun privacy.

Tao Tu Yun opened her eyes after she didn't hear noise. She was startled to see Tao Fang Ao sitting on the bed and looking upset with her.

'Why did you runaway?' Tao Fang Ao asked.

'I... missed my parents,' Tao Tu Yun said.

'Tu Yun, you're lying,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'If you ran away because you missed your parents then why are you avoiding my eyes?'

'I... didn't want to stay here,' Tao Tu Yun said and bravely looked at Tao Fang Ao's intense eyes.

'I told you,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'You can't leave here until I have proof who is my fiancée. By running away, are you admitting you're a fake? I want you to think carefully before you answer me. I don't care who deceives me, including you, because I'll make them pay for deceiving me.'

Tao Fang Ao was waiting for someone to return with the evidence. But he didn't need evidence to know Tao Tu Yun was his real fiancée.

Tao Fang Ao knew Tao Tu Yun cared about him. But he didn't know why she continued to reject him. What secret was she hiding?

Tao Tu Yun felt like Tao Fang Ao could see through her heart.

'Tu Yun, stay here and sleep,' Tao Fang Ao said.

Tao Fang Ao stormed outside because he didn't want to argue with Tao Tu Yun while she was recovering from her chest wound.

Days later, Tao Fang Ao returned to his bedchamber to check up on Tao Tu Yun's condition again.

'Su Wu, is Tu Yun still sleeping?' Tao Fang Ao said.

'Yes second master Tao,' Su Wu said. 'Mistress is scared of cold weather. She always sleeps more during winter days.'

'Is Tu Yun feeling better?' Tao Fang Ao asked.

Tao Fang Ao sat on the bed and his fingers gently stroked Tao Tu Yun's pale face. Ever since the day they had a confrontation, she slept every time he checked up on her.

'Mistress, rarely left the bed,' Su Wu said. 'Rest and meals helped mistress recover faster.'

'Su Wu, you can leave,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'I'm staying here to take care of Tu Yun.'

'Yes second master Tao,' Su Wu said and left.

Tao Fang Ao couldn't believe what a foolish good heart Tao Tu Yun possessed. She would rather risk her life to save someone else's life by using her gift. Even when facing an assassin, she used her body to protect Su Wu's life.

'Tu Yun, you finally opened your eyes while I'm here,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'How is your chest wound?'

Tao Fang Ao tucked Tao Tu Yun's hair behind her ears so he had a clear view of her beautiful face.

'I felt better days ago,' Tao Tu Yun said. 'As long as I don't move strenuously then I won't feel chest pain.'

No matter how much Tao Tu Yun distant herself from Tao Fang Ao, he wouldn't give up on her. But she didn't want to admit that she loved him.

'Su Wu said that you've been lying in bed for days,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'Do you want me to take you outside?'

'It's cold outside,' Tao Tu Yun said and pulled the blanket up to her neck.

'Alright,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'Today it's snowing outside. Stay here and keep warm.'

'I heard Su Wu said you saved me that day,' Tao Tu Yun said.

'If I didn't find you in time, you wouldn't be alive today,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'Tu Yun, who wants to kill you?'

Tao Tu Yun didn't think saving elder Jiang's life would lead to another person dying in elder Jiang's place.

‘Tu Yun, don’t think too much,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘What you need to do is rest so you’ll recover faster.’

‘Alright,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun let Tao Fang Ao hold her hand and closed her eyes. The love between them was hot compared to the cold snow outside.

End of Chapter Six (Part 2)

Related

part 1

RFF – Chapter Seven (Part 1)



Half a month later, Tao Tu Yun recovered and walked outside the bedchamber in a white dress and a fur cape.

Tao Tu Yun took a deep breath. The snow was melting. She didn't think she would stay at the Tao Manor past winter. She silently asked her heart if she should accept Tao Fang Ao's love.

'Mistress, what are you thinking about?' Su Wu asked.

'Nothing,' Tao Tu Yun said.

'Mistress, let's go back inside,' Su Wu said. 'Mistress, I don't want you to catch a cold.'

'I want to go for a walk,' Tao Tu Yun said. 'I'm worried if I don't use my bones after being bedridden for half a month, I can't move my bones anymore. Su Wu, where is he?'

'Who?' Su Wu teased. 'If mistress mean second master Tao, he's outside giving rice grains to the poor.'

'Su Wu, take me to see him,' Tao Tu Yun said. 'I want to see if there's anything I can do to help.'

Tao Tu Yun didn't wait for Su Wu, she walked quickly to the front gates.

Outside the Tao Manor, poor people like beggars lined up to receive rice grains.

Tao Tu Yun understood why the Tao Household were loved by the citizens of Luo Yang province. The Tao Household's sincere generosity was admirable.

Su Wu noticed Li Tai Fang standing next to Tao Fang Ao and she frowned.

'Mistress, I'll take you over to second master Tao,' Su Wu said. 'Mistress, you can't give Li Tai Fang a chance to steal second master Tao.'

'There's no rush,' Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun could see clearly how much Tao Fang Ao hated Li Tai Fang standing close to him. Whereas Li Tai Fang pretended Tao Fang Ao's patience wasn't running out.

Tao Fang Ao felt Tao Tu Yun's presence. He turned around and saw Tao Tu Yun then he ran to her. In contrast Li Tai Fang glared at Tao Tu Yun.

'Tu Yun, what are you doing outside on a cold day?' Tao Fang Ao asked. 'Go back inside and wait for me.'

'I'm alright,' Tao Tu Yun said. 'It's not too cold. I want to stay here and wait for you.'

Tao Fang Ao hugged Tao Tu Yun.

'Alright,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'If you want to stay outside, I'll keep you warm.'

Tao Tu Yun was used to Tao Fang Ao hugging her in public so she didn't blush every time he hugged her.

The poor people whispered to each other and they speculated the beautiful woman in Tao Fang Ao's arms was his fiancée, Tao Tu Yun.

Tao Fang Ao was a skilful swordsman so he heard everyone gossiped about Tao Tu Yun. He hated people gossiping about Tao Tu Yun. When he was about to escort her back to the bedchamber, she let go of him and ran to help give the rice grains to poor people.

Tao Tu Yun ran to a little girl about eight years old. The little girl fell in the crowd and dropped the heavy bag of rice grains.

‘Little sister, you don’t need to pick up the fallen rice grains,’ Tao Tu Yun said gently.

Tao Tu Yun held the little girl’s cold hands in her hands. Her heart broke to see the little girl carrying a heavy bag of rice grains on a cold day. Where were the little girl’s parents?

‘But they stopped giving out rice grains,’ the little girl said tearfully.

‘Don’t worry,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘Big sister will help you carry another bag of rice grains home.’

Tao Tu Yun helped the little girl pick up the bag, and Tao Fang Ao helped Tao Tu Yun stand.

‘Tu Yun, when will you know how to take care of yourself?’ Tao Fang Ao asked.

Tao Fang Ao passed the bag to a servant. He instructed the servant to fill the bag with rice grains, fill another bag with fresh food and help carry the bags to the little girl’s home.

‘Tu Yun, next time take a look around you and see if there is anyone who you can ask for help,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘Don’t take everything onto your shoulders.’

Tao Fang Ao sensed the assassin following Tao Tu Yun’s movements. If Tao Fang Ao didn’t keep Tao Tu Yun close to his side, he was scared of losing her.

‘I’m sorry,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘I won’t worry you again.’

Tao Tu Yun understood Tao Fang Ao was worried about her. She smiled warmly to reassure him.

Tao Fang Ao didn’t know what to do with Tao Tu Yun. She read his moods perfectly but he wasn’t fooled, she was going to worry him again because behind her gentle facade was an intelligent, cunning and a stubborn person.

Tao Tu Yun waved farewell to the little girl.

‘Little sister, it’s cold today,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘Go straight home so you don’t catch a cold.’

‘Yes big sister,’ the little girl said. ‘Thank you big sister.’

The little girl smiled at Tao Tu Yun and she ran home.

Suddenly Tao Tu Yun felt faint. Tao Fang Ao held onto her and he heard her heart beating fast.

‘Tu Yun, what’s wrong?’ Tao Fang Ao asked.

Tao Tu Yun had a premonition of the little girl drowning in a river in three days. She wasn’t going to let the little girl drown, she needed to visit the little girl’s home and warn her to avoid rivers for three days.

‘Isn’t the little girl called Dou Dou and her adoptive grandma is the fortune teller?’ elder Jiang asked.

‘Elder Jiang, do you know the little girl?’ Tao Tu Yun asked.

‘Yes lady Tao,’ elder Jiang said. ‘Dou Dou is an orphan until the fortune teller adopted her.’

‘Elder Jiang, why is Dou Dou’s adoptive grandma known as the fortune teller?’ Tao Tu Yun asked.

‘The fortune teller is famous in Luo Yang province,’ elder Jiang said. ‘The fortune teller can predict a person’s future.’

‘Does the fortune teller and Dou Dou live together alone?’ Tao Tu Yun asked.

‘Yes lady Tao,’ elder Jiang said. ‘The fortune teller is elderly. She sends Dou Dou to look for food often.’

‘Dou Dou...’ Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Fang Ao squeezed Tao Tu Yun’s waist.

‘Tu Yun, enough,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘Dou Dou’s life is none of your business.’

Tao Fang Ao suspected Tao Tu Yun had a premonition about Dou Dou’s future. He didn’t want Tao Tu Yun to risk her life again to save another person’s life.

‘Tu Yun, I’ll escort you back to the bedchamber,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

Elder Jiang watched Tao Fang Ao escort Tao Tu Yun to the bedchamber. Elder Jiang rubbed his chin. Judging by Tao Fang Ao’s reaction to Tao Tu Yun’s curiosity about Dou Dou’s life, he suspected Tao Tu Yun foresaw Dou Dou’s future too.

Elder Jiang cursed inwardly. He knew Tao Tu Yun’s life would be in danger because she would warn Dou Dou. He was determined to keep a close watch

over Tao Tu Yun to make sure she didn't sneak out of the Tao Manor to warn Dou Dou, he didn't want anything bad happen to Tao Tu Yun.

End of Chapter Seven (Part 1)

Related

part 2

RFF – Chapter Seven (Part 2)



Li Tai Fang secretly eavesdropped on Tao Fang Ling and elder Jiang talking about Tao Tu Yun's situation. Afterward she walked to a courtyard to think of a plan to kill Tao Tu Yun.

'Why is that Tao Tu Yun so lucky?' Li Tai Fang asked. 'Why couldn't the assassin kill her? Why does she get to sleep in Tao Fang Ao's bedchamber?'

Feng Yu stood in a corner of the courtyard, and listened to Li Tai Fang scarily curse Tao Tu Yun.

'I don't believe Tao Tu Yun will always be lucky,' Li Tai Fang said. 'Since madam Zhang sent an assassin to kill her, I'll help the assassin to succeed this time.'

'Mistress, a person's life is important,' Feng Yu said.

Feng Yu wished she had a good mistress like Tao Tu Yun.

'Close your mouth!' Li Tai Fang said. 'Whose side are you on? Tao Tu Yun's side? Don't forget I'm your mistress. Don't open your mouth to oppose me again.'

'Mistress, I'm sorry,' Feng Yu said.

Feng Yu closed her mouth. She remembered Li Tai Fang's last maid disappeared mysteriously, and she didn't want the same thing to happen to her.

'Tomorrow I'm certain Tao Tu Yun will go see Dou Dou to warn Dou Dou,' Li Tai Fang said. 'I want you to send a message to madam Zhang that tomorrow is a good opportunity for the assassin to kill Tao Tu Yun.'

‘Yes mistress,’ Feng Yu said.

Feng Yu was scared to defy Li Tai Fang’s order. Feng Yu hoped that nothing bad would happen to Tao Tu Yun.

The next morning, Tao Tu Yun planned to go warn Dou Dou while Tao Fang Ao was working outside the Tao Manor.

‘Mistress, don’t go,’ Su Wu said.

‘Su Wu, you know I can’t let Dou Dou drown,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

‘Mistress, if I can’t stop you from going to see Dou Dou then I’m coming with you,’ Su Wu said.

Tao Fang Ao had instructed Su Wu not to let Tao Tu Yun leave the Tao Manor while he was away. But Su Wu knew she couldn’t persuade Tao Tu Yun not to go warn Dou Dou.

‘Thank you Su Wu,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘There’s not much time left. If you’re coming with me, we need to leave now.’

‘But mistress, second master Tao instructed the guards at the Tao Manor not to let you leave while he’s not here,’ Su Wu said. ‘How are we going to leave the Tao Manor?’

‘I have a way but it’ll give the guards a little pain,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

‘Mistress, what kind of pain?’ Su Wu asked.

‘Putting laxatives in their food,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun gave Su Wu a bag of laxatives. Su Wu secretly put the laxatives into the guards’ food. When the guards ran to empty their bowels, Tao Tu Yun and Su Wu ran to Dou Dou’s home.

Tao Tu Yun and Su Wu took the mountain path to Dou Dou’s home. They stopped in front of an old home.

‘Mistress, are you certain this is Dou Dou’s home?’ Su Wu asked.

Su Wu looked at the holes and stains on the windows again. Before Tao Tu Yun answered Su Wu, Dou Dou opened the door.

‘Big sister, what are you doing here?’ Dou Dou asked Tao Tu Yun.

‘Dou Dou, it’s good to see you,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘Su Wu, we found Dou Dou’s home.’

Tao Tu Yun crouched in front of Dou Dou and she held Dou Dou’s hands.

‘Dou Dou, do you want to go outside today?’ Tao Tu Yun asked.

‘Yes big sister,’ Dou Dou said. ‘My friend Yi Niu and I want to go play by the river today.’

‘Dou Dou, you can’t play by the river today!’ Su Wu said.

Dou Dou hugged Tao Tu Yun because Su Wu raising her voice scared her.

‘Su Wu, don’t scare Dou Dou,’ Tao Tu Yun said. She gently patted Dou Dou’s back. ‘Dou Dou, big sister Su Wu didn’t mean to raise her voice. Big sister Su Wu is worried about you.’

‘Dou Dou, I’m sorry I scared you,’ Su Wu said.

‘Big sister Su Wu, you don’t need to worry,’ Dou Dou said. ‘It’s safe for me to play by the river. If I don’t go see Yi Niu today, she won’t play with me again.’

‘Dou Dou, big sister came to visit you today,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘If Dou Dou isn’t home, who will show me where to sit?’

‘But...’ Dou Dou said.

‘Dou Dou, what if you stay home with mistress today and I’ll go explain to Yi Niu why you didn’t go to play by the river today?’ Su Wu asked.

‘Alright big sisters,’ Dou Dou said. ‘Why did big sisters want to visit me today?’

‘Dou Dou, let’s sit inside your home and I’ll explain,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

Dou Dou took Tao Tu Yun and Su Wu into her home. Dou Dou’s home was old but clean.

‘Dou Dou, is that you?’ the fortune teller asked from a bedchamber. ‘Didn’t you say you wanted to play with Yi Niu today?’

Dou Dou walked into the bedchamber with Tao Tu Yun and Su Wu. On the bed was an elderly woman who was coughing and had silver hair.

‘Grandma, big sisters came to visit me so I didn’t go to play with Yi Niu today.’

Dou Dou helped the fortune teller sit on a chair and she poured a cup of water for the fortune teller to drink.

‘Why did you two come here to see Dou Dou today?’ the fortune teller asked.

‘Elder, I’m about to tell you something that is hard to believe,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

‘Dou Dou, grandma wants to speak privately with big sisters,’ the fortune teller said. ‘Dou Dou, go wait in your bedchamber for a little while.’

‘Yes grandma,’ Dou Dou said.

Dou Dou wanted to stay and listen to what the fortune teller wanted to say o Tao Tu Yun privately, but she obediently walked to her bedchamber.

‘You can tell me why you’re here,’ the fortune teller said.

‘Elder, for the next two days, you can’t let Dou Dou leave here,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

‘Why?’ the fortune teller asked.

‘Because I had a premonition that in the next two days, Dou Dou will drown in a river,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

End of Chapter Seven (Part 2)

Related

part 1

RFF – Chapter Eight (Part 1)



‘Give me your hand,’ the fortune teller said.

The fortune teller’s reaction surprised Tao Tu Yun. She gave her hand to the fortune teller.

‘Lady Tao, you have a rare gift and a kind heart,’ the fortune teller said. ‘Did you know if you warn people about their deaths, the heavens will punish you?’

‘Yes elder,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

‘Lady Tao, because you helped people avoid their deaths the heavens’ punishment is that you won’t live past nineteen,’ the fortune teller said.

The fortune teller sighed. It was a pity someone with a kind heart like Tao Tu Yun was fated to die young.

The fortune teller confirmed what Tao Tu Yun knew. Tao Tu Yun had three months left until her nineteenth birthday, which was why she wanted to end her engagement with Tao Fang Ao and didn’t want him to grow attached to her.

‘Elder, can you help mistress live past nineteen?’ Su Wu asked.

‘The truth is when I adopted Dou Dou, I knew she is meant to die this year,’ the

fortune teller said. 'But I didn't know Dou Dou is going to die in two days. Thank you for risking your life to save Dou Dou's life. I'm sorry I don't know how to help you live past nineteen.'

'Elder, you don't need to be sorry toward me,' Tao Tu Yun said. 'It's my fate to die soon.'

'Mistress, you can't give up,' Su Wu said. 'Mistress, you can't leave me and second master Tao.'

'Su Wu, don't cry,' Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun didn't want to leave Su Wu and Tao Fang Ao.

'Wait!' the fortune teller said. 'Su Wu did you say that lady Tao is related to second master Tao from the Tao Manor?'

'Yes elder,' Su Wu said. 'Mistress is second master Tao's fiance.'

'If lady Tao is second master Tao's fiance then there is a chance she can live past nineteen,' the fortune teller said.

'Elder is it true?' Su Wu asked. 'Earlier didn't elder say that you can't help mistress?'

'If lady Tao is second master Tao's real fiance then I can help her,' the fortune teller said.

'Elder, are you saying my life is connected to being Tao Fang Ao's fiance?' Tao Tu Yun asked.

'Perhaps the heavens doesn't want someone with a kind heart like yours to die young,' the fortune teller said.

'Elder, tell me how you can help mistress?' Su Wu asked impatiently.

'Su Wu, you should learn how to be patient like your mistress,' the fortune teller said. 'Lady Tao, have you heard of a proverb, a charitable household always has excess warmth?'

'Elder, you can call me Tu Yun,' Tao Tu Yun said. 'Elder, I have heard a charitable household is a happy household.'

'The Tao Household has always been a charitable household and they have

helped many poor people,’ the fortune teller said and coughed. ‘Tu Yun, you’re born with a kind heart. You used your gift to save lives even though you know the heavens will punish you. Because of your kindness and the Tao Household’s generosity, there is a way to save you. You need one thousand finger prints from people who you and the Tao Household have helped. After you have one thousand finger prints, at the critical time, burn the papers and the heavens will hear their pleas to save you.’

‘Elder, are you certain mistress’ life can be saved this way?’ Su Wu asked.

‘Of course it’s not enough to save Tu Yun’s life,’ the fortune teller said. ‘Su Wu, come with me to my bedchamber and I’ll give you further instructions to save Tu Yun’s life.’

‘Mistress, stay here while elder gives me instructions,’ Su Wu said.

‘Tu Yun isn’t a child, you don’t need to worry Tu Yun will run wild outside,’ the fortune teller said.

Tao Tu Yun smiled because the fortune teller read her mind.

Su Wu helped the fortune teller walk to the bedchamber.

‘Su Wu, the instructions I’m about to give you is vital,’ the fortune teller said. ‘Whether Tu Yun lives or dies will depend on you.’

‘Elder, I promise I’ll remember the instructions you’ll give me,’ Su Wu said.

‘When I read Tu Yun’s palm, she only has one month left to live,’ the fortune teller said.

‘What?’ Su Wu asked.

‘Stay calm and don’t interrupt me,’ the fortune teller said. ‘When you return to the Tao Manor, you need to tell Tao Fang Ao what I’ve told you. He’ll help prepare one thousand finger prints for Tu Yun. It’s vital that you watch over Tu Yun closely. If Tu Yun coughs blood, you need to tell Tao Fang Ao that he needs to marry Tu Yun straight away. On their wedding day, you need to embroider Tu Yun’s name and date of birth on a fabric, and put the fabric on top of the Tao Household’s ancestors’ altar. The Tao Household’s ancestors will ask the heavens to save Tu Yun’s life. On their wedding night, you need to make certain their

bedchamber door is open, you can't let them close the door. On their wedding night at the hour of the ox (i.e. 1am to 3am), burn the papers of the finger prints and have everyone from the Tao Household pray in front of their bedchamber. To know when Ox-Head or Horse-Face comes to escort Tu Yun's soul, pour rice grains on the bedchamber floor. At the hour of the dragon (i.e. 7am to 9am) if Ox-Head or Horse-Face didn't come to escort Tu Yun's soul then Tu Yun's life is saved. Su Wu, did you remember the instructions I gave you?

'Yes elder,' Su Wu said and knelt in front of the fortune teller. 'Thank you elder, you're mistress' savior.'

'Su Wu, stand up,' the fortune teller said. 'The real savior is Tu Yun. If Tu Yun didn't risk her life to save Dou Dou then Tu Yun wouldn't have met me.'

'Elder, I still want to thank you for saving mistress' life,' Su Wu said.

'Su Wu, you're lucky to have a good mistress and Tu Yun is lucky to have a loyal maid,' the fortune teller said.

'Thank you elder,' Su Wu said and stood.

Later on the way back to the Tao Manor, madam Zhang's assassin appeared in front of Tao Tu Yun and Su Wu.

'Mistress, what should we do?' Su Wu said.

'Su Wu, don't be scared,' Tao Tu Yun said.

Suddenly Tao Fang Ao's secret guards sent to protect Tao Tu Yun surrounded the assassin.

'Lady Tao, go back to the Tao Manor with Su Wu,' a guard said. 'Leave this assassin to us.'

'Thank you for saving me and Su Wu,' Tao Tu Yun said to the guards.

End of Chapter Eight (Part 1)

Related

part 2

RFF – Chapter Eight (Part 2)



Madam Zhang had sent more assassins to kill Tao Tu Yun because she didn't want Tao Tu Yun to escape again. So when Tao Tu Yun and Su Wu was halfway back to the Tao Manor, another assassin appeared in front of Tao Tu Yun.

'Your life is over!' the assassin said to Tao Tu Yun.

Tao Tu Yun closed her eyes and accepted her fate.

Tao Fang Ao appeared at the critical moment. He checked Tao Tu Yun wasn't injured then he used his sword to fight with the assassin.

'Mistress, it's second young master!' Su Wu said.

Tao Tu Yun opened her eyes. She and Su Wu didn't expect someone like Tao Fang Ao who usually carried a fan was such a skilful swordsman.

Tao Fang Ao's merciless sword stabbed the assassin's chest. He withdrew the

sword and the assassin fell on the ground.

‘Second master Tao,’ elder Jiang called.

Elder Jiang brought guards to help Tao Fang Ao. Elder Jiang was relieved to see Tao Fang Ao, Tao Tu Yun and Su Wu were unharmed.

‘Interrogate the assassin and find out who sent the assassin to kill Tu Yun then take the assassin to the magistrate’s court,’ Tao Fang Ao instructed.

Tao Fang Ao turned around and hugged Tao Tu Yun tightly. She knew he was upset with her for putting her life in danger.

Tao Fang Ao silently took Tao Tu Yun back to the Tao Manor. In his calligraphy room, she sensed he was still upset with her.

Half a shichen hour later, Tao Fang Ao was still standing in front of the window of the calligraphy room. Tao Tu Yun was a little scared to say something to ease the tension between them.

Tao Tu Yun remembered seeing Tao Fang Ao’s guards returning home injured. It meant there were many assassins sent to kill her. She felt guilty his guards were injured because of her.

‘I’m sorry I went outside the Tao Manor on my own,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

‘You actually admit you did the wrong thing by going outside on your own?’ Tao Fang Ao asked. ‘Didn’t you learn anything from your chest injury? If I didn’t come in time to save you, do you think you’ll return to the Tao Manor alive? How can you keep risking your life to save people? Tu Yun, I’m disappointed in you.’

It was the first time Tao Fang Ao looked coldly at Tao Tu Yun. His disappointment toward her felt like a stab to her heart.

‘I can’t do nothing and let people die,’ Tao Tu Yun said and stood up from a chair.

Tao Tu Yun gripped her dress sleeves. She didn’t want Tao Fang Ao to see her pain and tears.

‘Tu Yun, even if you don’t care about your safety, do you think about the people who worry about you?’ Tao Fang Ao asked.

‘It’s not like that...’ Tao Tu Yun said.

‘You don’t need to say anything else,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘Go rest in the bedchamber. I want to be alone.’

Tao Fang Ao turned around to face the window. If he kept looking at Tao Tu Yun’s pale complexion, his heart would soften. He had to be firm with her otherwise she would risk her life again.

Since Tao Fang Ao didn’t want to see Tao Tu Yun, she ran outside the calligraphy room and silently cried.

Tao Fang Ao remembered how hurt Tao Tu Yun looked because of his harsh words. He picked up a chair and slammed it against the floor.

In the bedchamber, Su Wu opened the door for Tao Tu Yun. Su Wu didn’t expect to see Tao Tu Yun crying.

‘Mistress, what happened?’ Su Wu asked. ‘Why are you crying?’

Su Wu helped Tao Tu Yun to sit on a chair.

Su Wu knew Tao Tu Yun was gentle on the outside and a strong one on the inside. The number of times Su Wu saw Tao Tu Yun cry was less than the fingers on one hand. Su Wu suspected Tao Fang Ao must have said something to upset Tao Tu Yun.

‘Su Wu, am I wrong?’ Tao Tu Yun asked. ‘Is it wrong of me to care about helping people?’

Tao Tu Yun wiped the tears off her face and took a deep breath. She understood how much her parents and Su Wu worried about her for years.

‘Mistress, it’s not wrong of you to care about helping people,’ Su Wu said. ‘Yes, you make the people who care about you, worry about you. But we’re proud of you. What did second master Tao say to you to upset you?’

‘He said I’m a disappointment,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘It’s good I disappointed him because we don’t have a future together.’

‘Mistress, don’t say that,’ Su Wu said. ‘How can you live if you don’t marry second master Tao?’

‘Su Wu, don’t mention me marrying him again,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘I’ve accepted my fate.’

Tao Tu Yun didn’t expect when she was ready to accept Tao Fang Ao’s love, he didn’t love her anymore. Since nothing happened between them, it was better if she left the Tao Manor and returned home.

‘Mistress, you can’t do anything impulsive,’ Su Wu said. ‘I believe second master Tao must have said those hurtful words to you out of anger because you risked your life. Mistress, everyone can see how much second master Tao loves you. You should wait for him to calm down. I believe he’ll forgive you.’

Su Wu didn’t want Tao Tu Yun to die. Su Wu believed Tao Fang Ao and Tao Tu Yun loved each other, and Tao Fang Ao wouldn’t let go of Tao Tu Yun.

‘Su Wu, is that true?’ Tao Tu Yun asked.

Tao Tu Yun wanted to believe Su Wu. Perhaps when Tao Fang Ao calmed down, he would listen to her explanation and she wouldn’t feel it was hopeless between them.

Tao Tu Yun’s heart constricted and her face turned white.

‘Mistress!’ Su Wu called.

End of Chapter Eight (Part 2)

Related

part 1

RFF – Chapter Nine (Part 1)



Elder Jiang reported to Tao Fang Ao about the Tao Household's charity donations in the calligraphy room.

Elder Jiang noticed the broken chair on top of the broken vase. If he had known Tao Fang Ao lost his temper earlier, he wouldn't have entered the calligraphy room.

'Elder Jiang, you can leave,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'Give instructions to everyone that no one is allowed to come into my calligraphy room.'

'Yes second master Tao,' elder Jiang said.

Elder Jiang walked outside the calligraphy room and he carefully closed the door. He watched Tao Fang Ao grow up. It was rare for Tao Fang Ao to lose his temper, which meant Tao Fang Ao must have fought with Tao Tu Yun.

'Elder Jiang,' Su Wu called. 'Is second master Tao inside the calligraphy room?'

'Second master Tao instructed that no one is allowed to disturb him,' elder

Jiang said. 'Su Wu, why don't you wait for another day to see second master Tao?'

'Elder Jiang, I have something important I need to tell second master Tao,' Su Wu said.

'Su Wu, it's better if you go back and be with lady Tao,' elder Jiang advised.

'Second master Tao, it's about mistress!' Su Wu cried out.

'Su Wu, how can you stand here and yell?' elder Jiang asked.

'Elder Jiang, let Su Wu come into the calligraphy room,' Tao Fang Ao said.

Su Wu ran into the calligraphy room. She was speechless after she noticed the broken chair and vase.

'Didn't you have something important to tell me?' Tao Fang Ao asked impatiently.

'Today I followed mistress to the fortune teller's home so mistress could warn Dou Dou,' Su Wu said in a shaky voice. 'The fortune teller has a way to save mistress' life.'

'Explain everything calmly,' Tao Fang Ao said.

Tao Fang Ao didn't want to hear Tao Tu Yun wanted to leave him again.

'Second master Tao, there's something important I hid from you,' Su Wu said.

'Tell me!' Tao Fang Ao said.

Su Wu explained about Tao Tu Yun not living past nineteen and told Tao Fang Ao about the fortune teller's instructions to save Tao Tu Yun's life.

'Are you telling the truth?' Tao Fang Ao asked.

Tao Fang Ao wondered if Tao Tu Yun rejected him because she thought she couldn't live past nineteen. Did it mean there was hope Tao Tu Yun would accept him?

'Second master Tao, everything I told you is true,' Su Wu said.

'Leave everything to me,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'Go and take good care of Tu Yun.'

'Mistress...' Su Wu said.

‘What’s wrong with Tu Yun?’ Tao Fang Ao asked.

‘Mistress cried and fainted in the bedchamber,’ Su Wu said.

‘What?’ Tao Fang Ao asked worriedly. ‘Did you call the physician yet?’

Tao Fang Ao strode toward the door, stopped and turned around.

‘Did Tu Yun faint because she warned Dou Dou?’ Tao Fang Ao asked suspiciously.

‘Yes,’ Su Wu said.

‘You can go back to Tu Yun,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

Tao Fang Ao didn’t know if he should go see Tao Tu Yun. If he went to see Tao Tu Yun, she wouldn’t understand how much it affected him every time she risked her life.

‘Second master Tao, I can see you care about mistress,’ Su Wu said. ‘You said you’re disappointed in mistress out of anger. The truth is mistress loves you.’

Su Wu bowed to Tao Fang Ao and she rushed back to the bedchamber.

Tao Fang Ao stood at the door crazily happy. He hoped Su Wu didn’t say Tao Tu Yun loved him because Su Wu was worried he wouldn’t save Tao Tu Yun’s life. He wanted to hear Tao Tu Yun tell him she loved him from her own mouth.

Two days later, Tao Tu Yun woke up.

‘Su Wu...’ Tao Tu Yun called weakly.

‘Mistress, you’re awake,’ Su Wu said. ‘You slept for two days. Do you want me to call the physician?’

Su Wu helped Tao Tu Yun sit up on the bed.

‘I’m alright,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘Su Wu, in the last two days did he sleep in the calligraphy room?’

‘Yes mistress,’ Su Wu said.

‘Su Wu, I think it’s better if I go home,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘I miss my parents, and I don’t want them to worry about me.’

‘Mistress, wait another month,’ Su Wu said. ‘Second master Tao can escort

you home after the wedding. Your parents will be happy to see you and second master Tao.'

'Su Wu, is lady Tao awake?' elder Jiang asked from the door.

'Yes elder Jiang,' Su Wu said. 'You can come inside and see mistress.'

Elder Jiang walked into the bedchamber and he felt sad to see Tao Tu Yun looked ill.

'Lady Tao, you look ill,' elder Jiang said.

Su Wu and elder Jiang exchanged a look and sighed.

'Of course mistress looks ill,' Su Wu said. 'It's because of second master Tao.'

'Lady Tao, second master Tao has been moody since he fought with you,' elder Jiang said. 'Second master Tao took out his temper on the servants because he's worried about you. The servants are scared to serve him.'

'Elder Jiang, do you think he is willing to see me?' Tao Tu Yun asked.

'Yes lady Tao,' elder Jiang said. 'If you go see second master Tao, you'll make the servants' work lives easier.'

Su Wu chose a warm red cape, and she draped it around Tao Tu Yun's shoulders.

Feng Yu knocked on the door.

'Lady Tao,' Feng Yu called anxiously from the door.

'Su Wu, open the door for Feng Yu,' Tao Tu Yun said.

Su Wu opened the door and Feng Yu walked into the bedchamber. Feng Yu was scared to see elder Jiang too.

'Lady Tao, I...' Feng Yu said. 'Everyone needs to come to second master Tao's calligraphy room immediately. Mistress put lust powder into second master Tao's bowl of soup.'

'What?' elder Jiang asked and ran to the calligraphy room.

'Su Wu, Feng Yu, we should follow elder Jiang too,' Tao Tu Yun said.

End of Chapter Nine (Part 1)

Related

part 2

RFF – Chapter Nine (Part 2)



Elder Jiang, Tao Tu Yun, Su Wu and Feng Yu ran into the calligraphy room. They saw a flipped table, a broken bowl of soup and they heard Li Tai Fang's whimpering out of fear.

Elder Jiang supported the sweaty Tao Fang Ao.

'Second master Tao, are you alright?' elder Jiang asked.

'Order the guards to imprison Li Tai Fang in the storage room,' Tao Fang Ao instructed. 'I'll deal with her later.'

The guards imprisoned Li Tai Fang, and elder Jiang helped Tao Fang Ao walked to the bed in the calligraphy room.

'Second master Tao, you're impressive,' elder Jiang said. 'Even under the influence of lust powder, you can control your body for this long.'

Tao Fang Ao didn't hear elder Jiang's praise because he became unconscious on the bed.

'Elder Jiang, will he be alright?' Tao Tu Yun asked.

'Lady Tao, second master Tao needs you to take care of him tonight,' elder Jiang said.

Elder Jiang signalled Su Wu to leave the calligraphy room with him.

‘Elder Jiang... Su Wu...’ Tao Tu Yun called.

Tao Tu Yun sighed and sat on the bed next to Tao Fang Ao. She watched over him, and fell asleep on the bed in the middle of the night.

When Tao Fang Ao woke up, he was happy to see Tao Tu Yun sleeping next to him. He tenderly stroked her cheeks, and she stirred awake.

‘You’re awake,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘Do you feel pain anywhere?’

‘No,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘Did you stay with me the whole time?’

Tao Fang Ao hadn’t seen Tao Tu Yun for two days. He missed her and her complexion was still pale.

‘Yes,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘I was worried about you. Why did lady Li give you lust powder?’

‘Because she wants to use force to become my wife,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

Tao Fang Ao remembered his head felt dizzy after eating a bowl of soup. Then Li Tai Fang entered the calligraphy room without his permission. Li Tai Fang shamelessly swayed her hips toward him. He flipped the table. Luckily elder Jiang ran into the calligraphy room and Li Tai Fang’s plan failed.

‘Tu Yun, tomorrow the truth will be exposed,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

‘Do you mean...’ Tao Tu Yun said.

If Tao Fang Ao had evidence then he knew Tao Tu Yun was his real fiancée. Was he going to reject her tomorrow?

‘I’ll explain everything tomorrow,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘My head is still dizzy. I can’t escort you back to the bedchamber tonight. Sleep with me here tonight.’

Tao Tu Yun stood up abruptly.

‘I can go back to the bedchamber on my own,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

‘Stay,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘I promise I won’t touch you before the wedding. It’s late so it’s not safe for you to walk back to the bedchamber alone. Sleep with me here tonight.’

‘But... the wedding isn’t certain,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

Tao Tu Yun’s back faced Tao Fang Ao, because she didn’t want him to see how hurt she felt thinking about him rejecting her.

‘Is that so?’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘Keep your eyes wide open and see what happens. Do you want to come back to the bed voluntarily or do you need my help?’

Tao Tu Yun understood Tao Fang Ao wasn’t bluffing. She slowly laid on the bed and he hugged her tightly.

‘Fang Ao...’ Tao Tu Yun called and blushed.

‘Don’t move,’ Tao Fang Ao warned. ‘If you move, I won’t keep my promise and I’ll touch you tonight. Listen to me, close your eyes and sleep.’

Tao Tu Yun laid stiffly on Tao Fang Ao’s chest. A while later, she fell asleep.

Tao Fang Ao kissed Tao Tu Yun’s soft lips.

‘I promise my wife is going to live a long life with me,’ Tao Fang Ao whispered in Tao Tu Yun’s ear.

The next morning, everyone in the Tao Manor gathered in a courtyard.

‘If anyone has something to confess, confess now and I’ll be lenient otherwise I’ll hand you over to the magistrate,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

Li Tai Fang refused to confess.

‘Xiao Liang, present the evidence,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

In the audience, Luo Bing Liang finally understood why Xiao Liang was missing from the Tao Manor for more than a month.

‘Xiao Liang, tell everyone what happened when you went to Liu Yue province to investigate the truth,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

Li Tai Fang’s body shook after she heard Xiao Liang came back from Liu Yue province.

‘Yes second master Tao,’ Xiao Liang said. ‘When I arrived at Liu Yue province, I went to see the head of Liu Yue province, who is lady Tao’s father. Lady Tao’s father gave me the letter that your father wrote to her father about her

betrothal to you when she was a six-year-old.'

Xiao Liang passed the letter to Tao Fang Ao.

'I went to search for Lady Li's parents,' Xiao Liang said. 'At lady Li's parents' home, her parents said that lady Li ran away from home because she was unhappy with her betrothal to a man who isn't second master Tao.'

Xiao Liang captured Li Tai Fang before she could escape.

'Let go of me!' Li Tai Fang said. 'So what if I'm a fake? If Tao Tu Yun came here to end the betrothal, why can't she give second master Tao to me? Tao Tu Yun, why didn't you leave earlier if you don't want to marry second master Tao?'

'Close your mouth!' Tao Fang Ao ordered. 'I warned you, I won't be merciful to anyone who deceived me. Not only did you deceive me, but you sent a message to madam Zhang about Tu Yun going to see Dou Dou. Tu Yun almost died because of you! You also put lust powder in my soup. You're a wicked woman with a black heart. Even if you were my real fiancée, I would end my betrothal with you. Guards, take her to the magistrate. I don't want to see her face again.'

'Feng Yu, you betrayed me!' Li Tai Fang said. 'I won't spare you!'

'Mistress, I'm sorry,' Feng Yu said. 'I didn't want you to continue making mistakes.'

'Fang Ao, can you spare Feng Yu?' Tao Tu Yun asked. 'Don't take Feng Yu to the magistrate.'

'Alright,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'Guards kick Feng Yu outside the Tao Manor. In the future Feng Yu is not allowed to step foot inside the Tao Manor. Everyone else can leave.'

Tao Tu Yun understood Tao Fang Ao wanted everyone to leave except her. She followed him into the bedchamber.

'Fang Ao, did you know the truth since the beginning?' Tao Tu Yun asked.

'I suspected you're my real fiancée but I needed evidence to prove Li Tai Fang was a fake,' Tao Fang Ao said.

Tao Fang Ao stood in front of Tao Tu Yun and he looked intensely into her eyes.

‘Tu Yun, tell me, do you still want to end our betrothal?’ Tao Fang Ao asked.

‘I...’ Tao Tu Yun said.

In the beginning, Tao Tu Yun thought there was no hope for her to live past nineteen so she wanted to end the betrothal. But after the truth was exposed, she felt sad that Tao Fang Ao wanted to end the betrothal.

‘Good,’ Tao Fang Ao said and hugged Tao Tu Yun. ‘Since you didn’t protest, we can have the wedding anytime.’

‘Wait,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘There’s something I hid from you.’

Tao Tu Yun pushed Tao Fang Ao away from her, and she prepared herself for rejection.

‘Fang Ao, the reason why I wanted to end the betrothal is because I won’t live past nineteen,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘Do you want to marry someone who only has less than three months to live?’

‘Tu Yun, why didn’t you come see me when you turned sixteen?’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘If you came to see me sooner, I would have found a way to give you a long life sooner. Su Wu told me the truth already. I was waiting to hear the truth from your mouth. I want to marry you regardless of your health. I promise, you’ll be living a long life with me. I’ll hold hands with you to our old age.’

Tao Tu Yun cried happy tears. Suddenly she coughed out blood and fainted. Tao Fang Ao caught her before she fell on the ground.

End of Chapter Nine (Part 2)

Related

part 1

RFF – Chapter Ten (Part 1)



Everyone at the Tao Manor were anxious since Tao Tu Yun was unconscious.

‘How is Tu Yun?’ Luo Bing Liang asked the physician impatiently.

The physician let go of Tao Tu Yun’s wrist. Then the physician looked at everyone’s worried faces and shook head sadly at Tao Fang Ao.

‘Second master Tao, lady Tao’s heart condition is rare,’ the physician said. ‘Her heart pulse is faint like her heart stopped beating. I’m sorry. It appears lady Tao won’t live past tomorrow.’

The bedchamber became silent and tenser. No one wanted to believe the physician’s examination was true.

Su Wu cried loudly in a corner while Tao Fang Ao sat on the bed next to Tao Tu Yun, waiting for her to wake up.

‘Impossible,’ Luo Bing Liang said. ‘Tu Yun is young. I won’t believe she’s dying. She only spat out blood. She is going to live a long life.’

Luo Bing Liang looked disbelievingly at Tao Fang Ling. She wanted Tao Fang Ling to tell the physician’s examination was wrong.

‘Are you certain...’ Tao Fang Ling said.

‘First master Tao, I’m sorry,’ the physician said. ‘I can’t save lady Tao.’

‘Second brother...’ Tao Fang Ling said.

‘Elder Jiang!’ Tao Fang Ao called.

Elder Jiang ran into the bedchamber.

‘Second master Tao, I’m here,’ elder Jiang said.

Elder Jiang sensed the tension in the bedchamber. He suspected the physician gave bad news about Tao Tu Yun’s health.

‘Elder Jiang, have you prepared everything I asked you to prepare?’ Tao Fang Ao asked.

‘Yes second master Tao,’ elder Jiang said. ‘When the news was spread about lady Tao, many people voluntarily travelled around Luo Yang province and Liu Yue province and they helped to collect one thousand finger prints in two days.’

‘Good,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘Elder Jiang order the servants to prepare the wedding. I’m marrying Tu Yun tonight.’

Everyone were surprised by Tao Fang Ao’s words except for Su Wu.

‘Quickly, go prepare the wedding!’ Tao Fang Ao ordered.

Elder Jiang stumbled backward, turned around and ran outside.

‘Second brother, tell me what happened,’ Tao Fang Ling said.

‘First brother, come outside with me,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

Tao Fang Ao’s eyes lingered on Tao Tu Yun sleeping on the bed for a while then he followed Tao Fang Ling outside the bedchamber.

‘Su Wu, stop crying,’ Luo Bing Liang said. ‘Tao Fang Ao won’t let Tu Yun die.’

Luo Bing Liang patted Su Wu’s back and followed Tao Fang Ling outside the

bedchamber too.

‘Mistress, did you hear?’ Su Wu asked softly. ‘Second master Tao is marrying you tonight. You’re not going to die.’

In Tao Fang Ling and Luo Bing Liang’s bedchamber, Tao Fang Ao stood in front of the window and he explained Tao Tu Yun’s situation.

‘Second brother, why didn’t you tell us about Tu Yun’s situation sooner?’ Tao Fang Ling asked.

‘Having less people know about Tu Yun’s situation is my way of protecting her,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

Tao Fang Ao wished Tao Tu Yun worried about her own life as much as she worried about saving people.

‘I didn’t think a gift like Tu Yun’s gift exist in the world,’ Luo Bing Liang said. ‘It’s as rare for someone like Tu Yun to exist in the world who cares more about saving people than her own life.’

‘Second brother, what happens if the fortune teller’s way to save Tu Yun’s life doesn’t work?’ Tao Fang Ling asked.

Tao Fang Ling was skeptical about fortune tellers. But he wanted to believe Tao Tu Yun’s life could be saved.

‘Fang Ling is right,’ Luo Bing Liang said. ‘What should we do if Tu Yun...’

‘It’ll work,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘Tu Yun will be my wife, and we’ll grow old together.’

Tao Fang Ling and Luo Bing Liang didn’t want to upset Tao Fang Ao by voicing all their doubts. They looked at each other, and understood Tao Fang Ao loved Tu Yun too deeply to accept there was a chance the fortune teller’s way would fail. They could only hope Tao Tu Yun’s life could be saved.

‘Second brother, you have two shichen hours left until the wedding,’ Tao Fang Ling said. ‘Go change into the groom’s clothes. Let Bing Liang and I oversee the wedding preparations for you.’

‘Thank you first brother,’ Tao Fang Ao said.

Tao Fang Ling was both a father and older brother in Tao Fang Ao's eyes. Even though no one could stop Tao Fang Ao from marrying Tao Tu Yun, he was grateful for Tao Fang Ling's support.

'Second brother, you don't need to thank me,' Tao Fang Ling said. 'I'm your first brother, it's my duty to take care of you. I'll even fight with Dizang if Dizang appears to take Tu Yun's soul.'

Tao Fang Ling held Luo Bing Liang's hand, and they walked outside to oversee the wedding preparations.

In the evening, everyone from the Tao Manor attended the wedding in the ceremonial hall.

The groom Tao Fang Ao and the bride Tao Tu Yun were dressed in red.

Su Wu helped the unconscious Tao Tu Yun stand and bow during the wedding ceremony.

Elder Jiang cried the happiest tears to see Tao Fang Ao marry Tao Tu Yun because he watched Tao Fang Ao grow up.

After the wedding ceremony, Tao Fang Ao carried Tao Tu Yun to the bedchamber.

'Elder Jiang, did you put the fabric that Su Wu embroidered my wife's name and date of birth on the altar?' Tao Fang Ao asked. 'Have you instructed everyone what time to burn the paper finger prints and to ask the heavens to save my wife outside the bedchamber?'

'Yes second master Tao,' elder Jiang said.

'Good,' Tao Fang Ao said.

Elder Jiang walked outside the bedchamber, where Luo Bing Liang was scared they couldn't save Tao Tu Yun's life.

'Fang Ling, I'm scared...' Luo Bing Liang said.

'Bing Liang, you need to believe,' Tao Fang Ling said. 'For second brother's sake, all we can do is believe we can help save Tao Tu Yun's life.'

'First master Tao is right,' elder Jiang said. 'We need to believe we can help

save second master Tao's wife. The Tao Household's ancestors are asking the heavens to save their descendant's wife too.'

Xiao Hong and the other servants gathered outside the bedchamber before the ox hour because they wanted the heavens see how much they truly wanted the heavens to let Tao Tu Yun live.

The servants stared anxiously at the lit red lanterns outside the bedchamber while they asked the heavens to let Tao Tu Yun live.

Tao Fang Ling gave out scented candles to the servants. They knelt around a circle of lit scented candles outside the bedchamber.

At the hour of the ox, everyone at the Tao Manor heard an eerie dog bark that sounded like Ox Head coming toward the bedchamber.

Inside the bedchamber, Tao Fang Ao hugged Tao Tu Yun tightly. If he couldn't feel her faint heartbeat then he would have thought she was dead.

Tao Fang Ao heard the eerie dog bark too. He wasn't going to let Ox Head take Tao Tu Yun from him.

A gust of wind blew the lit red lanterns in the bedchamber. Tao Fang Ao heard crunching footsteps on the scattered rice floor, and saw Ox Head's footprints on the scattered rice floor too. In his life, he feared losing Tao Tu Yun the most.

'No!' Tao Fang Ao said. 'I won't let anyone take Tu Yun away from me!'

Tao Fang Ao felt an invisible presence going back and forth in front of the bed like it was searching for something.

A while later, Tao Fang Ao felt Tao Tu Yun stopped breathing, and the invisible presence slowly moved away from the bed.

Tao Fang Ao looked toward the open door and he was scared to see Ox Head carrying Tao Tu Yun's soul away from the bed. In that moment he truly believed the fortune teller's words.

'No!' Tao Fang Ao yelled.

Everyone heard Tao Fang Ao's pitiful yell, and they ran into the bedchamber. When they saw Tao Fang Ao cry, they cried too.

Luo Bing Liang cried loudly on Tao Fang Ling's chest. She didn't want to accept that they failed to save Tao Tu Yun's life.

'Mistress...' Su Wu called in a choked voice and cried.

'Everyone leave!' Tao Fang Ao said. 'Don't disturb my wife and me!'

Everyone saw Tao Fang Ao buried his face on Tao Tu Yun's neck, and they understood how much he was grieving.

After everyone went outside the bedchamber, Tao Fang Ao still hugged Tao Tu Yun tightly. He didn't want to accept he lost Tao Tu Yun forever.

Memories of Tao Tu Yun appeared in Tao Fang Ao's head. Like the first day he met her and saved her from a pervert. How she looked when she found out she lost the betrothal jade bracelet. She wasn't angry and attempted to leave the Tao Manor. That day he didn't know why he didn't want her to end their betrothal and thought of ways to detain her at the Tao Manor. He was attracted to her gentleness and kind heart. He didn't know when his attraction turned into deep love. But the moment Ox Head took her soul, he truly knew how deeply he loved her.

Tao Fang Ao regretted hurting Tao Tu Yun when he said he was disappointed in her because she risked her life regardless of how much he and the people who care about her valued her life.

Tao Fang Ao kissed Tao Tu Yun's forehead and his tears dripped onto her face.

End of Chapter Ten (Part 1)

Related

part 2

RFF – Chapter Ten (Part 2)



Tao Fang Ao was lost in his grief that he didn't notice Tao Tu Yun was slowly opening her eyes.

'Ah...' Tao Tu Yun murmured.

Tao Tu Yun's soft murmur startled Tao Fang Ao. He slowly opened his teary eyes, looked at Tao Tu Yun's face and cried joyful tears.

News of Tao Fang Ao's dead wife coming back to life quickly spread throughout Luo Yang province. The citizens believed the generations of the Tao Household's good deeds miraculously revived Tao Tu Yun's life.

The physician believed in miracles for the first time when the physician checked Tao Tu Yun's pulse. Tao Tu Yun's pulse was healthy compared to her faint pulse the last time the physician examined her.

Everyone in the Tao Manor took good care of Tao Tu Yun, and she recovered her health quickly.

'Mistress, eat this bowl of soup,' Su Wu said.

Tao Fang Ao walked into the bedchamber and saw his wife was awake.

'Su Wu, I'll feed my wife,' Tao Fang Ao said.

'Fang Ao, I can feed myself,' Tao Tu Yun protested.

Tao Fang Ao took the bowl of soup from Su Wu's hands and gestured Su Wu to leave.

Su Wu left the bedchamber and Tao Fang Ao sat on the bed next to Tao Tu Yun with the bowl of soup in his hands.

‘Let me feed you,’ Tao Fang Ao insisted.

Tao Fang Ao thought his wife’s complexion was still pale but he was grateful she was alive.

‘Fang Ao, I’m sorry I made everyone at the Tao Manor worry about me,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

After Tao Tu Yun woke up, Su Wu recounted everything Tao Fang Ao and everyone else at the Tao Manor did to save Tao Tu Yun’s life.

‘Tu Yun, you’re not an outsider,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘You’re my wife. It’s natural for everyone at the Tao Manor to take care of my wife. Besides, of course I would honor my promise for us to grow old together.’

Tao Tu Yun’s heart was deeply moved by Tao Fang Ao’s words.

Tao Fang Ao fed Tao Tu Yun the bowl of soup. He put the empty bowl of soup on the table and hugged her.

Tao Fang Ao could only relax when he could feel Tao Tu Yun’s heartbeat. The memory of her heart stopped beating traumatized him.

‘Fang Ao, I can’t believe I’m alive,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘We’re married and we’ll get to grow old together.’

Tao Tu Yun felt her being alive was surreal. She was grateful the heavens let her live a long life with Tao Fang Ao.

‘Wife, you owe me a wedding night,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘You need to compensate me a wedding night.’

Tao Fang Ao pulled the beaded curtains down. He laid on top of Tao Fang Ao’s soft body and kissed her lips while undressing her and himself.

The beaded curtains clinked together in rhythm with the newlyweds’ movements on the bed.

When Tao Tu Yun woke up again, her body ached and on her left wrist there was a familiar jade bracelet with Tao Fang Ao’s name engraved on the jade bracelet. Seeing Tao Fang Ao’s name made her remember their first time together and her face turned red.

Su Wu parted the beaded curtains and Tao Tu Yun coughed awkwardly. Tao Tu Yun was embarrassed Su Wu saw her naked body after her first time together with Tao Fang Ao.

‘Mistress, I prepared a bath tub of warm water for you,’ Su Wu said. ‘After a bath, you’ll feel refreshed.’

Su Wu helped Tao Tu Yun sit in the bathtub. She suppressed her urge to tease Tao Tu Yun after seeing Tao Fang Ao’s kiss marks all over Tao Tu Yun’s body.

‘Su Wu, the bath water is comfortably warm,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘How did you know when I’ll wake up?’

‘Master instructed the servants to keep the bath tub of water warm and that I should help mistress bathe when you wake up,’ Su Wu said.

‘Master?’ Tao Tu Yun asked. ‘Su Wu, your mouth knows how to adapt quickly.’

Su Wu smiled. She was happy Tao Tu Yun married a good man like Tao Fang Ao. She was lucky to have a good mistress and master.

Su Wu helped wash Tao Tu Yun’s body. When Tao Tu Yun felt sleepy, Tao Fang Ao quietly entered the bedchamber and gestured for Su Wu to leave again.

Tao Fang Ao grabbed the dry cloth from the bed, wrapped it around his wife’s wet soft body. He kissed her lips and his desire for her intensified.

‘Fang Ao, what are you doing?’ Tao Tu Yun asked shyly.

Tao Tu Yun was wide awake when Tao Fang Ao suddenly carried her from the bath tub to the bed.

‘Don’t worry,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘Soon you’ll be familiar with performing your wifely duties with your husband.’

Tao Fang Ao sat on the bed and Tao Tu Yun sat on his lap. He stared intensely at her face.

‘Why are you staring at me?’ Tao Tu Yun asked.

Tao Tu Yun avoided Tao Fang Ao’s intense eyes like he wanted them to burn together.

‘Tu Yun, did you know I almost turned insane when you stopped breathing in

my arms?’ Tao Fang Ao asked. ‘I hated myself because I couldn’t save you. I watched helplessly as Ox Head carried your soul away. Now getting to hold you in my arms is the most precious gift to me. Tu Yun, promise me that we won’t take each other for granted and we’ll love each other to our old age.’

Tao Fang Ao hugged his wife tightly. He wished their bodies could melt together so he couldn’t lose her again.

Tao Tu Yun wrapped her arms around Tao Fang Ao’s neck. The sad tone in his voice showed her how much he must have grieved when he thought he lost her forever, it made her heart break.

‘Fang Ao, after I coughed blood, I entered a nightmare,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘In the nightmare, Ox Head carried my soul away from you. I heard you call my name despairingly but Ox Head didn’t let my soul turn around to see you. When Ox Head was about to leave the Tao Manor with my soul, the heavens sent an elderly man from the north-west direction who held a powerful sword to stop Ox Head from carrying me to see Dizang. The elderly man said out of consideration of the Tao Household’s generations of good deeds, I can live a long life with you but the heavens took away my gift. Ox Head and the elderly man disappeared then I woke up in your arms.’

‘North-west direction?’ Tao Fang Ao asked. ‘Tu Yun, north-west is the direction of the Tao Household’s ancestors’ altar.’

‘Fang Ao, does that mean the elderly man is your ancestor?’ Tao Tu Yun asked.

‘Tu Yun, you don’t need to overthink things,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘I’m thankful you’re alive. The most important thing right now is that you need to comfort me. I’m still scared of losing you.’

Tao Fang Ao took off the cloth wrapped around Tao Tu Yun’s body, and she understood what kind of comfort he wanted from her.

Tao Tu Yun closed her eyes and Tao Fang Ao kissed her lips. He whispered he loved her in her ear while his hands stroked her soft body.

The newlyweds’ bodies peaked together countlessly throughout their postponed wedding night.

In the morning, Tao Fang Ao and his wife burned joss sticks to thank the Tao

Household's ancestors. He wanted to take his wife to Liu Yue province to visit her parents, but she wanted to visit the fortune teller and Dou Dou's home before they travel to Liu Yue province.

Later in the morning, a horse carriage stopped in front of the fortune teller's home and Tao Fang Ao helped his wife step out of the horse carriage.

Dou Dou opened the front door before Tao Fang Ao and Tao Tu Yun knocked on the front door.

'Big sister, come inside,' Dou Dou said. 'Grandma's right. Grandma said big sister will visit us this morning.'

Tao Fang Ao and Tao Tu Yun followed Dou Dou inside the old home, and they saw the fortune teller sitting on an old chair like the fortune teller was expecting them.

'Tu Yun, you're here,' the fortune teller said. 'You brought second master Tao too.'

Tao Tu Yun knelt in front of the fortune teller and she held the fortune teller's hands.

'Elder, thank you for saving my life,' Tao Tu Yun said.

'Tu Yun, you should thank yourself and the Tao Household's ancestors,' the fortune teller said. 'You're alive because of your kind heart and the generosity of the Tao Household's ancestors. It's your fate to marry second master Tao, because the heavens wanted you to live a long life.'

'Elder, if you didn't show us how to save Tu Yun's life, Tu Yun wouldn't be alive,' Tao Fang Ao said. 'Thank you for saving Tu Yun's life.'

'Second master Tao, it's I who should thank you and the Tao Household for taking care of me for years,' the fortune teller said.

Tao Fang Ao didn't expect there would be a day he would receive the biggest gift from the poor people the Tao Household helped for generations.

Tao Fang Ao and Tao Tu Yun ate with the fortune teller and Dou Dou before they began travelling to Liu Yue province by horse carriage.

'Fang Ao, will you be upset with me if I want to do something to help other

people?’ Tao Tu Yun asked.

‘It depends whether it’ll affect your health,’ Tao Fang Ao compromised.

‘Fang Ao, promise you’ll agree with me first and I’ll tell you,’ Tao Tu Yun said.

‘Tu Yun, how many people do you plan on helping?’ Tao Fang Ao asked suspiciously.

‘Fang Ao, I want to invite the fortune teller and Dou Dou to live with us in the Tao Manor,’ Tao Tu Yun said. ‘The fortune teller is elderly and Dou Dou is a little girl...’

‘I understand,’ Tao Fang Ao said. ‘Of course they can live with us in the Tao Manor.’

Tao Tu Yun smiled and Tao Fang Ao sighed. He knew as long as she was happy and healthy, he would always concede to her.

Tao Fang Ao didn’t expect he would follow in Tao Fang Ling’s footsteps and marry a troublesome woman who loved to help people. But he admitted that he and Tao Fang Ling were blessed men to marry Tao Tu Yun and Luo Bing Liang.

Tao Fang Ao sighed again. He thought it was his and Tao Fang Ling’s fate to fall in love with troublesome women. A troublesome future with their wives was a happier future than a smooth future without them.

End of Chapter Ten (Part 2)

The End of Real Fake Fiance

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